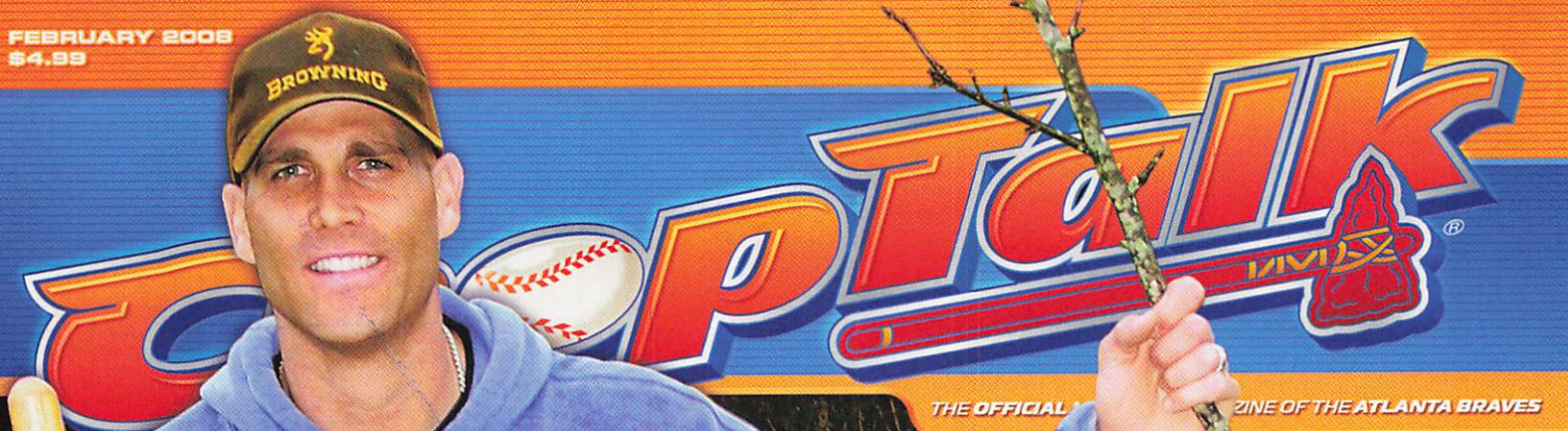


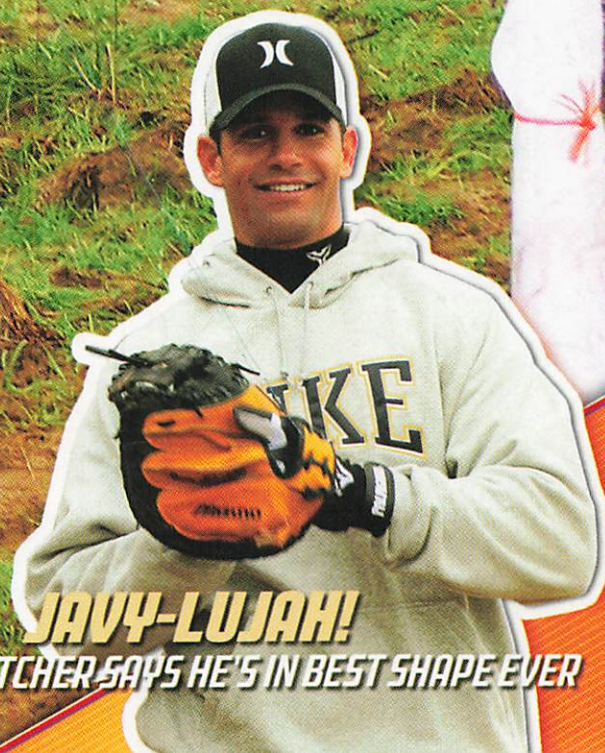
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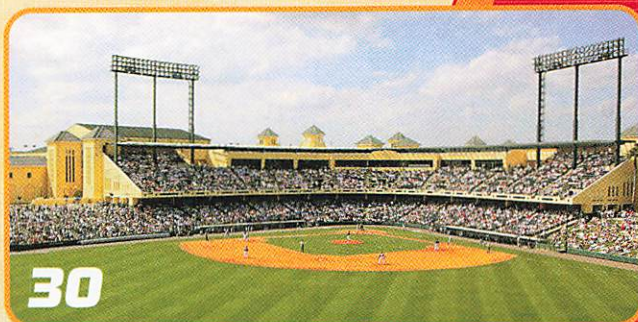
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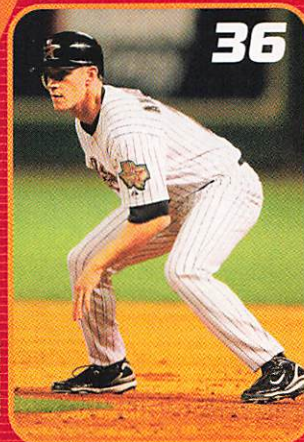
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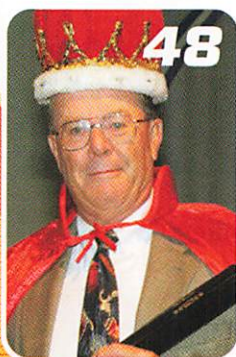
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ATLANTA BRAVES



JOHN BURKETT / CHOP TALK



MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL

ON DECK

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VOLUME 4, NUMBER 2

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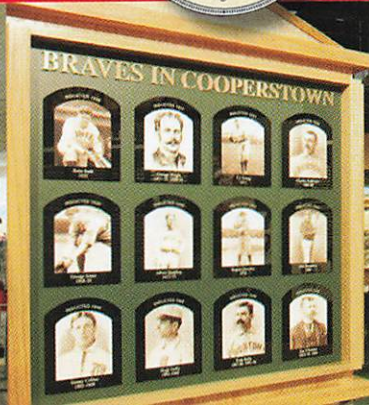
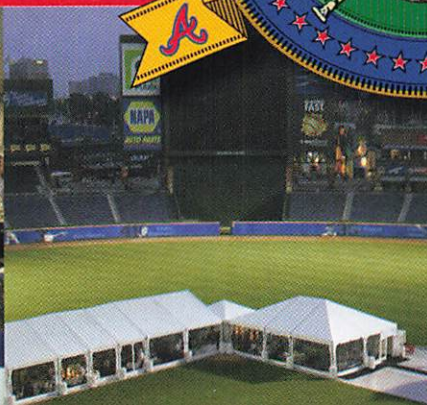
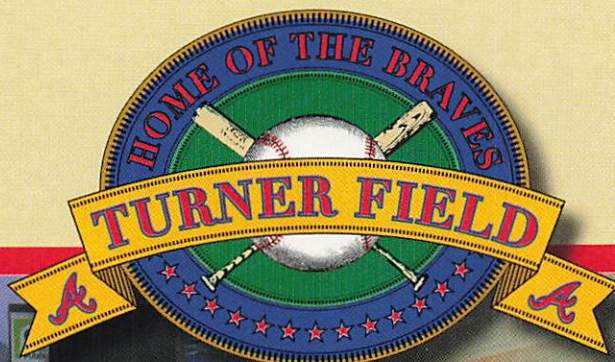
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HOME | PLATE

THE HUDSONS' FARM RETREAT

Tim and Kim Hudson used the names of their children - Kennedie, Tess and Kade - to name their Alabama retreat where this cozy cabin (inset) backs up to a lake.



KENTESKA



BY PATTY RASMUSSEN



One of the greatest fringe benefits Tim Hudson received in his trade from the Oakland A's to the Braves in December 2004 was Atlanta's proximity to his childhood home and family, located little more than an hour away in Phenix City, Alabama.

"I've stayed very close to a lot of friends from college and even high school," said Tim, 32. "Most of my family still lives where we lived when I was a kid."

That's not just lip service. Tim's friends acknowledge the wiry pitcher who played baseball at nearby Auburn University is the same fun-loving, country boy they've always known and loved. And Tim's long-held dream of owning a large piece of property in the area came to pass in December 2005 when he and his wife, Kim, signed the papers on 780 acres that includes rolling hills, pastures, hard wood and pine forests, a lake and a pond, and one very old trailer only a man's man could love!

The Hudsons live 40 minutes south of Turner Field in Peachtree City, and "the farm," as it's generally called, is approximately 100 miles west. It's so convenient that Tim has left the ballpark after day games and driven straight to the Alabama property to enjoy a night of solitude and a morning of fishing before returning to the ballpark the next afternoon for a night game.

"I had wanted to get something like this for a long time, but I didn't know how long it would take," said Tim.

His father, Ron, and older brothers, Ronnie and Keith, all involved in construction work, were on the lookout for something suitable for Tim when they learned the man who owned

the property was interested in selling it.

"It was just what I wanted," said Tim.

The Hudsons named their retreat Kenteska Plantation, a combination of the names of their children - daughters Kennedie (6) and Tess (4) and son Kade (3). The children love the place almost as much as their parents, and why wouldn't they? Between riding shotgun with their daddy in the John Deere Gator or running around the trailer with their cousins, Kenteska is a kid's paradise.

That's not even taking into account the Kenteska menagerie. Tim's father has taken the role of unofficial caretaker of the property.

"I call him Dr. Doolittle," said Tim. "Every time I turn around, he's got another animal out here."

In addition to the obligatory farm dogs, including a high-strung Dalmatian named Turner, adopted in Atlanta during a Braves pet calendar photo shoot, Kenteska is home to several roosters and

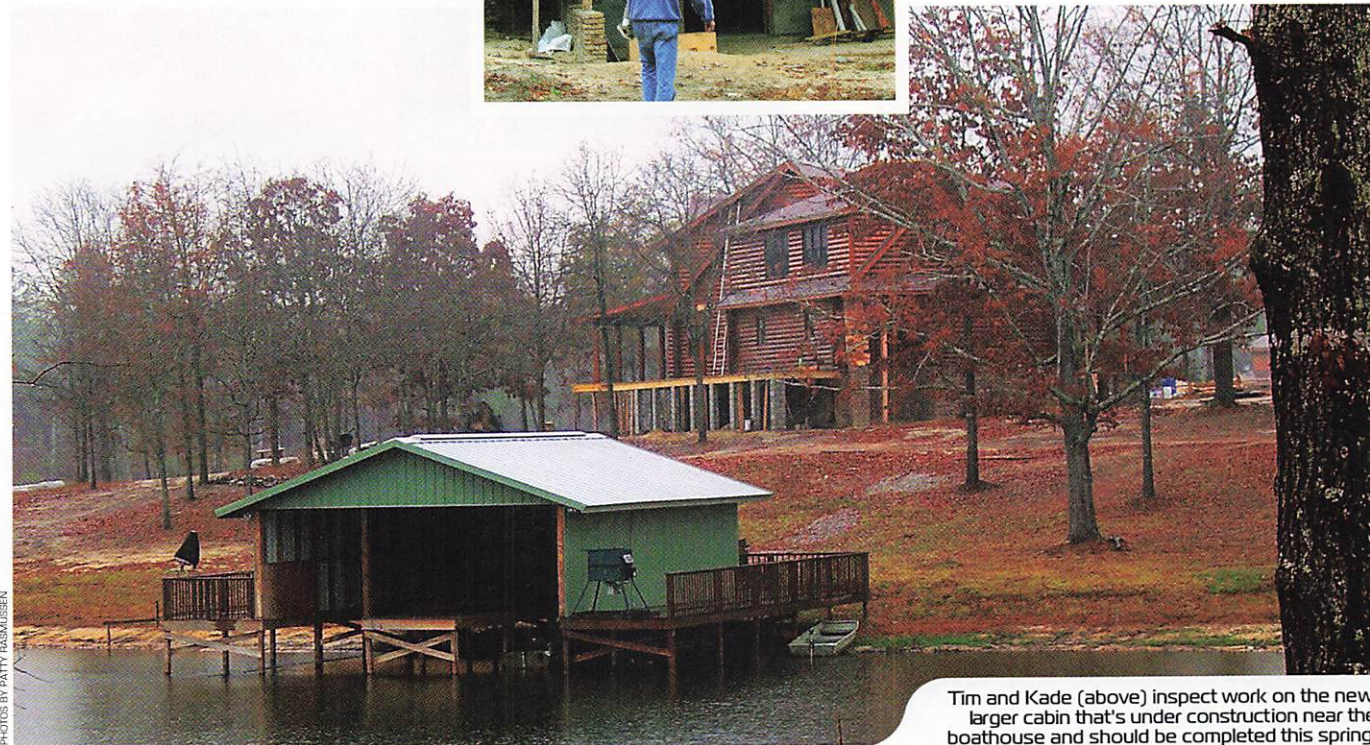
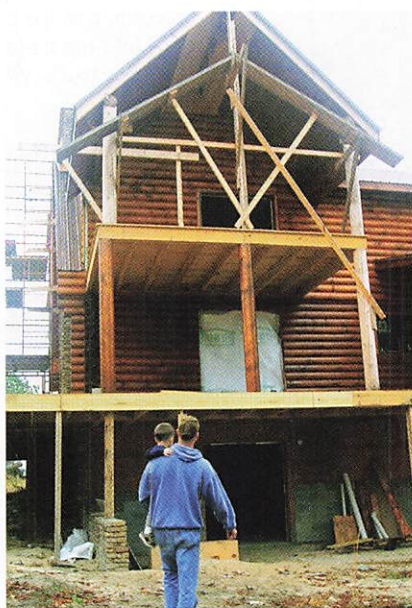
chickens, a donkey and her colt, two horses, a bull and a cow. The lake is stocked with bass, and the property is a great place to hunt deer and wild turkey.

It became apparent early that the trailer was not quite up to Kim's living standards. In fact, not by a long shot!

"I was never the picky type, but really, the trailer is not for women and children!" said Kim.

But Tim added, "I can't imagine ever getting rid of it."

The much-beloved trailer, complete with two white columns, has been expanded twice. And while it's fine for a bunch of guys on a weekend hunting trip, its status has long since dropped from rustic to seedy!



Tim and Kade (above) inspect work on the new, larger cabin that's under construction near the boathouse and should be completed this spring.



with one queen-sized bed and another twin bed tucked under the eaves. There's a full bathroom on the second floor. The back porch overlooks the lake, and across a small cove, the Hudsons can watch the progress being made on the farm's next major capital improvement - a substantially larger log cabin, just up the hill from the boathouse.

When finished, the cabin will be able to accommodate their family, Tim's parents, and his brothers' families for family and holiday gatherings. The showplace on the lake is essentially two houses joined by a common, wrap-around porch. At this point, it takes a certain amount of vision to imagine the finished product.

The bottom floor of the main house will have a game room and kitchen area, a guest bedroom and bathroom. The main floor features the kitchen and dining area and a spacious open living area highlighted by a gorgeous stone fireplace and cathedral ceiling. The upper level houses the family bedrooms and bathrooms. A porch connects the upper and lower levels of the two main structures.

The smaller of the two structures would have been a garage, according to the original plans.

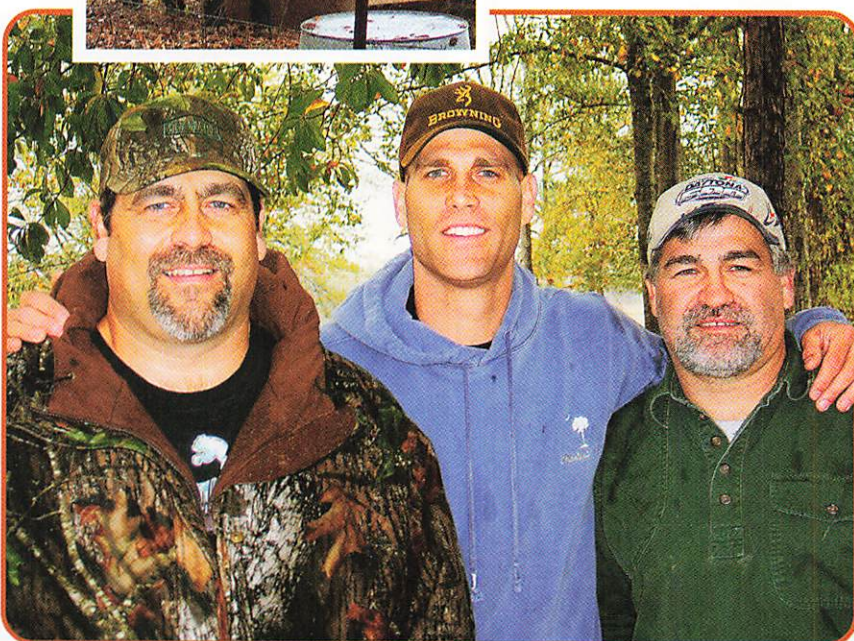
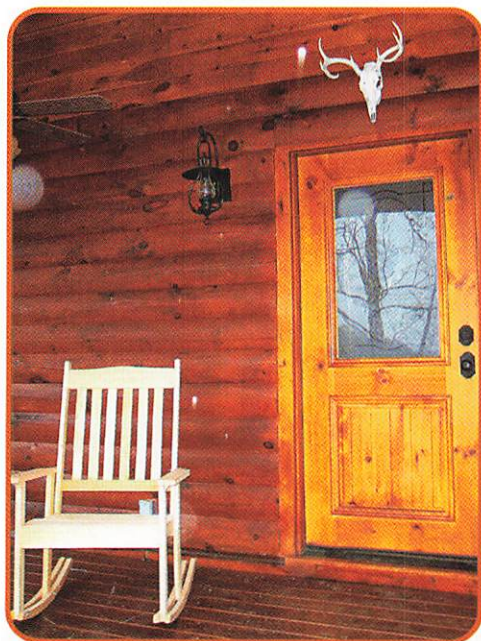
"I told the builder," said Tim, "I have all this land where I can park my truck. What do I need a garage for?"

Kenteska scenes: The infamous trailer with its white columns, the farm's obligatory cow, the back door of the cabin, and Tim with brothers Ronnie (L) and Keith.



Last year, Tim and Kim added a cozy log cabin on the shore of the lake. The first floor has a closet, half bathroom with laundry appliances, a full kitchen and dining area and a small, simply furnished, living area with a beautiful stacked stone fireplace. The mantel is crafted from a piece of cedar tree, also used to create the property's dramatic entrance.

A small, winding staircase leads to a loft bedroom



Instead, the garage was raised to the level of the house. The floor plan is open. First floor is living, dining and bar/kitchen areas. The second floor will be a bunkhouse-style sleeping area. Depending on weather and building schedules, the big cabin should be finished this spring, and the Hudsons will begin putting it to use once they return home from spring training.

This off-season, Tim, Kim and the kids made several trips to Kenteska, sometimes for the day, often taking a long weekend. Usually trips to the property involved some type of work, followed by lots of play.

A trip Tim made in mid-December was no exception. Accompanied by Kennedie and Kade, Tim and his "band of brothers" - both kin and close friends - spent three days hunting, grilling out, dodging much-needed rain storms, and planting trees in a pasture Tim called the "green field."

"We put in red maples along the road to the main house," said Tim. "And we're planting two orchards of crabapple trees in a pasture. Deer love crabapples."

Between heavy downpours and light, misting rain, Tim, his brothers, their cousin, Lamar "Bubba" Hudson, nephew, Steven Shores, and good friends, Grady Singletary and Billy Huckabee, loaded shovels, rakes and PVC pipe in trucks and Gators for the soggy drive to the pasture.

The bucketed trees were placed in groups of 15 on either side of a hill in the middle of the pasture. Though some tractors and trailers came with the property, Tim's builder offered the use of his backhoe to dig the holes. And Bubba, whose work at a nearby municipality involves driving heavy equipment, handled backhoe-driving, hole-digging duties.

Working quickly, the men cut the buckets off the bottoms of the saplings and loosened the roots before placing them into the neatly dug holes. Meanwhile, Tim used a power saw to cut lengths of PVC pipe to use for irrigation, the theory being that rainwater would go down the pipe to the roots at the bottom of the tree.

Once they finished the first orchard, they headed over the hill to start on the second grove. The mist had turned into a ghostly fog, and the moist December air soaked through their clothes. When the planting was finished, the group returned to the cabin to start grilling dinner.

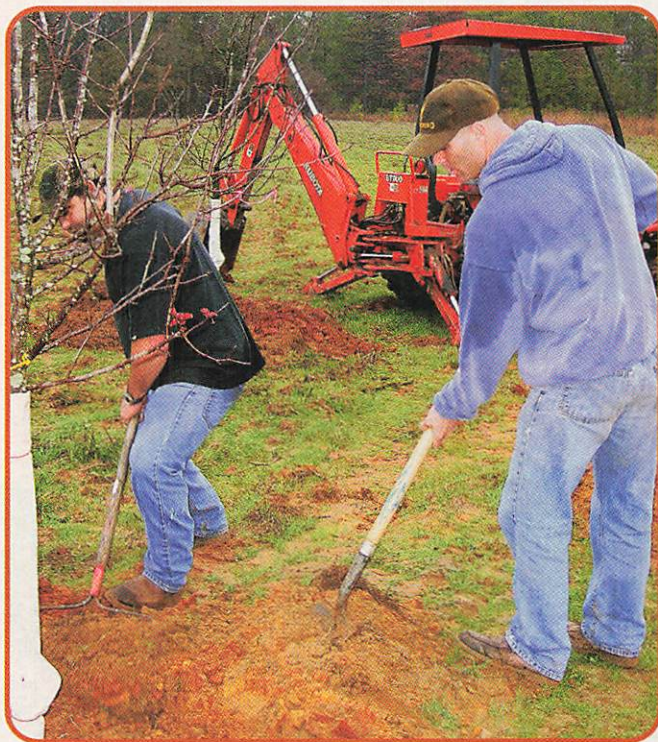
When the men were planting the trees, Kennedie, Kade and a couple of their cousins played in the cabin under the watchful eye of Holly Hudson, another cousin who's a college student in Atlanta and was visiting Alabama for the weekend.

A tent was set up outside the cabin, and a table and large grill were placed beneath. In no time, Bubba, who is considered the camp cook, had ribs, chicken and sausage sizzling over the fire and a pot of pork and beans simmering on the stove.

The children rough-housed in the cabin, tossing sock balls from the loft to the living room, until Holly put a stop to it. Tim folded a load of laundry fresh from the dryer, and as things quieted down indoors, darkness descended outside, and the story telling around the fire became more animated.

The conversation centered on sports, hunting, family and old times, and these are the moments Tim envisioned when he and Kim bought the place.

"I really love it," said Tim. "This is the place where my family and friends can come and spend time together. And days like today, when we're all working and getting stuff done, makes the time later - talking and just hanging out - even better."



Tim and friend Billy Huckabee (L) spend a soggy December afternoon planting two orchards of crabapple trees.

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PAINTING THE CORNERS

BY JAY BUSBEE



THE ALL-TIME ATLANTA "GO-TO" GUYS LINEUP

WITH ONLY A FEW WEEKS LEFT 'til spring training, it's time for one last winter what-if. If you could pick from any era in Atlanta Braves history, dating to 1966, who would you choose for a game's most critical moments?

Who would you tap to start a must-win game? Who would you want at the plate with the Braves down in late innings? Who would you want in the clubhouse to keep the team level through good times and bad?

Of course, Bobby Cox doesn't have the same advantage. He can't pair, say, a 1991 John Smoltz with a 2003 Javy Lopez. So, we'll also make some picks based on the 2008 roster. If even half these end up coming true, it'll be a very good season indeed for Braves fans.

GUY YOU WANT ON YOUR SIDE IN THE PRESSURE OF A PENNANT RACE:

Hank Aaron, 1973. The Atlanta Braves only won one division title with Aaron (1969), but it's impossible to overstate the pressure on him while he chased Babe Ruth's home run record. He'd handle a division race just fine.

THIS YEAR: Chipper Jones. He's seen pretty much everything that could possibly happen on a baseball field, short of aliens landing on the pitcher's mound.

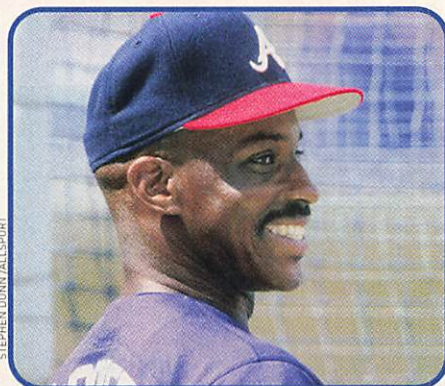
GUY TO KEEP AN INNING ALIVE: Ralph Garr, 1971. You don't hear enough about Garr these days, but in 1971, he had 219 hits, 180 of which were singles.

THIS YEAR: Yunel Escobar hit .326 last year, good enough for the Braves to trade All-Star Edgar Renteria. And Escobar was an even better hitter with runners on base, averaging .333.

GUY TO SLAM THE DOOR: John Smoltz, 2002. Is there anything Smoltz can't do on the mound? The Cy Young-winning starter shifted to the bullpen and merely set a National League record in 2002 with 55 saves.

THIS YEAR: Smoltz is in the rotation, and by his own admission he won't be taking too many games into the ninth. But Rafael Soriano should do a fine job of overwhelming opposing hitters once Smoltz hits the showers.

GUY TO PUT THE TEAM ON HIS BACK: Fred McGriff, 1993. Few players have



STEPHEN DUNN/ALLSPORT

Few players have ever given a team the sort of lift that Fred McGriff gave the Braves when he was acquired at mid-season in 1993.

had such an impact on one season as McGriff did in his Atlanta debut. After McGriff's arrival in July, the Braves went 51-19 and erased a 10-game deficit to win the division.

THIS YEAR: This is Mark Teixeira's year to prove he's one of the best in the game. We just hope it's not his last in an Atlanta uniform.

GUY TO PITCH ONE MUST-WIN GAME: Come on, you need to ask? Tom Glavine, 1995. Eight innings of one-hit,

THIS YEAR: Since Smoltz probably won't be lighting match bonfires like he did in his younger days, Francoeur's still the one to keep a close eye on.

GUY YOU WANT PITCHING ON OPENING DAY: Greg Maddux, 1993 and onward. Maddux is a perfect 6-0 on Opening Days, with his most memorable performance coming in his Braves debut. Pitching against the Cubs, his former team, Maddux threw a 1-0 masterpiece. A few more would follow.

THIS YEAR: Cox will likely go with Smoltz, but Tim Hudson or that new kid Glavine might get consideration.

GUY WHO'LL GIVE YOU A HOME RUN ON DEMAND:

Andruw Jones, 2005. Back in 2005, it seemed any time Andruw made contact, the ball wasn't coming back. He hit 51 homers that season, a Braves record. He belted one during the All-Star Game, and also hit the longest ever by a Braves player at Turner Field (452 feet). He had nine multi-homer games and two walkoff homers. Yeah, it was a good year to be sitting in the cheap seats when Andruw came to the plate.

“ WITH CHIPPER, McCANN, FRANCOEUR AND TEIXEIRA IN THE LINEUP, THERE'LL BE NO SHORTAGE OF LONGBALLS. ”

shutout ball in Game 6 and the most important win in Atlanta sports history.

THIS YEAR: Glavine concedes that he's probably a No. 3 guy now. So when the Braves square off against the Red Sox in the World Series, we'd start Smoltz in the decisive Game 7.

GUY TO LOOSEN UP THE CLUBHOUSE: Despite their accounting-firm clubhouse reputation, the Braves have had their share of pranksters and goofballs, like Mark Lemke, Eddie Perez, and a young Smoltz. But nobody's done a better job of keeping the team loose than Jeff Francoeur, who's fast becoming the new face of the Braves.

THIS YEAR: With Chipper, Brian McCann, Francoeur and Teixeira in the lineup, there'll be no shortage of longballs. Our guess is Tex'll lead the team in that department.

GUY WHO'LL BE A GOOD SOLDIER: Phil Niekro, 1979. Rough stretches happen even for the best of teams. At least now they come in months, like June, rather than decades, like the '70s. Even Niekro set Atlanta records for starts (44), complete games (23) and innings (342). Now that's durability.

THIS YEAR: Let's hope we don't have to suffer through a losing streak to find out.

WEREN'T YOU... ?

IN 1993, Vince Moore was a promising young outfielder at the Braves' advanced Class A Durham affiliate, where he was hitting .292 with 14 home runs and 64 RBIs in just 87 games. He was a hot commodity, so hot that the San Diego Padres were willing to part with Fred McGriff to get him.

It was a landmark event in Braves history when John Schuerholz consummated that deal on July 18, 1993, acquiring McGriff in exchange for Moore, pitcher Donnie Elliott and outfielder Melvin Nieves. The trade enabled the Braves to rally from 10 games back to win the division.

Moore, on the other hand, is still trying to reach the majors.

"I hear about that trade all the time!" he said by phone from Edinburg, Texas, where he will manage the independent Edinburg Coyotes of United League Baseball (ULB) for a third season. "Everyone knows Fred McGriff, and even now, I get people saying they still remember me from that trade."



Vince Moore, who was a top Braves prospect before being traded for Fred McGriff in 1993, is managing an independent league team and still trying to reach the majors.

A fifth-round draft pick out of Houston in 1991, Moore never got above Double A as a player. He began playing independent league ball in 1998. In 2005, he made his managerial debut for Edinburg and took the Coyotes to the regular season title, earning recognition as ULB co-Manager of the Year.

"I love baseball, and I love managing," Moore said. "I'm striving to get to the big leagues."

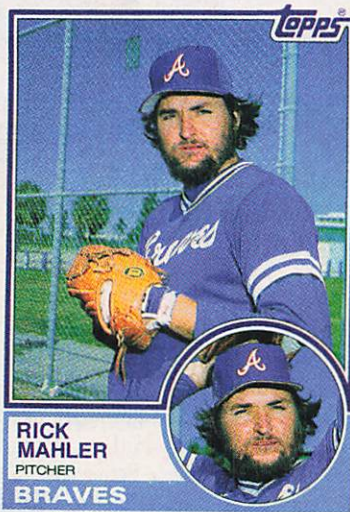
Moore says he's lost touch with Elliott, who made it to the majors with the Padres for 31 games in 1994-95, and with Nieves, who played in the majors for parts of seven seasons, hitting 63 home runs for the Braves, Padres, Tigers and Reds.

"Getting traded was an awkward feeling at first," said the 36-year-old Moore, who lives in Houston. "The first thing that goes through your mind is that the Braves don't want you. After a while, you see it's all a business, and when you figure who you were traded for, you realize the Padres had a lot of interest to trade someone of McGriff's caliber for you."

CARD OF THE MONTH

RICK MAHLER was a workhorse, a model of reliability. He had a losing record (96-111) for his 13-year career, but on Opening Day, he was a hall-of-famer. With the start of the season fast approaching, it's a good time to honor this former Brave who died in 2005 at the age of 51 as he was preparing for his second season as a minor league coach in the Mets organization.

Mahler, a member of Cincinnati's 1990 World Championship team, spent his first 10 big league seasons with the Braves and was the Opening Day starter five times (1982, '85-88). In



1987, he opened the season by shutting out the Phillies, 6-0, for his third Opening Day shutout, a National League record. The other two came in 1986 and in 1982, the latter when he beat the Padres, 1-0, on a two-hitter to spur the eventual division-winning Braves on a 13-0 start to the season.

Bobby Cox, Mahler's first major league manager in 1979, called him "a great competitor."

This Topps 1983 issue is card No. 76, and it can be found at hobby shops and online for very reasonable prices. Check with your local card dealers (consult the Yellow Pages) or do an internet search to shop for this and other Braves cards for your collection.

THE LOST EPISODE



A SPECIAL SHOWING of the complete NBC television broadcast of the Milwaukee Braves' classic Game 4 victory over the Yankees in the 1957 World Series is scheduled Feb. 2 at Long Wong's Chinese-American Sports Bar at 52nd and Bluemound road in Milwaukee. According to Doak Ewing of Rare Sports Films, who has the film, it is the first time it has ever been shown in public.

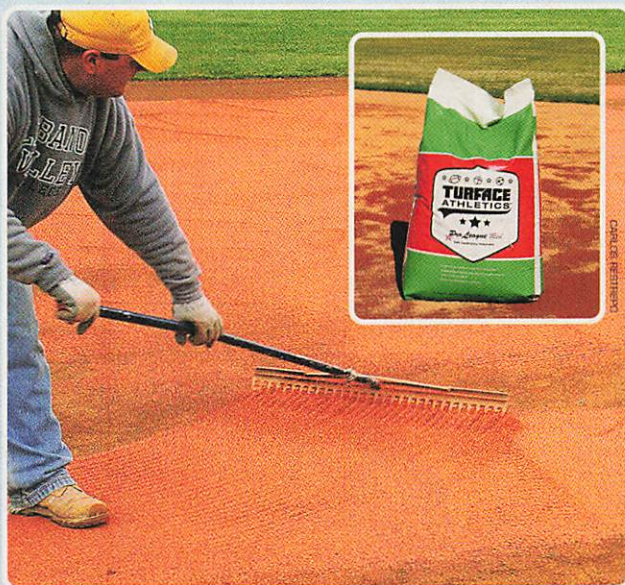
Warren Spahn pitched all 10 innings for the win in the famous "black shoe polish incident" game that ended in the bottom of the 10th with a two-run homer by Eddie Mathews (above). Johnny Logan, who tied the game with a 10th-inning double, and Felix Mantilla, a pinch-hitter, will attend, as will Mathews' son, Dr. Ed Mathews.

"This is very rare," said Ewing. "Only a handful of pre-1960s World Series games exist on film. It's on four reels, so we'll have breaks for three reel changes."

The event is being presented by the local chapter of SABR. Admission is free and open to all fans. Seating is very limited and was close to being full at press time. If interested, check with Rick Schabowski of the SABR chapter at (414) 322-4997 to see if seats remain. Lunch and beverages will be available.

HOW DO THEY DO THAT?

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EVEN WHEN A STEADY RAIN FALLS during a game, Turner Field's dirt areas never get overly muddy or messy. A product called Turface makes that possible.

Turface Pro League - the version used by the Braves - is a calcined clay from a manufacturer called Profile Products. It serves as both a natural soil conditioner and a moisture management tool. Braves field director Ed Mangan and his crew use it on the infield and on Turner Field's other clay areas as a top dressing.

When Mangan waters the infield before the game, the moisture gets absorbed by Turface. This helps give the ball an even hop and provides consistent footing.

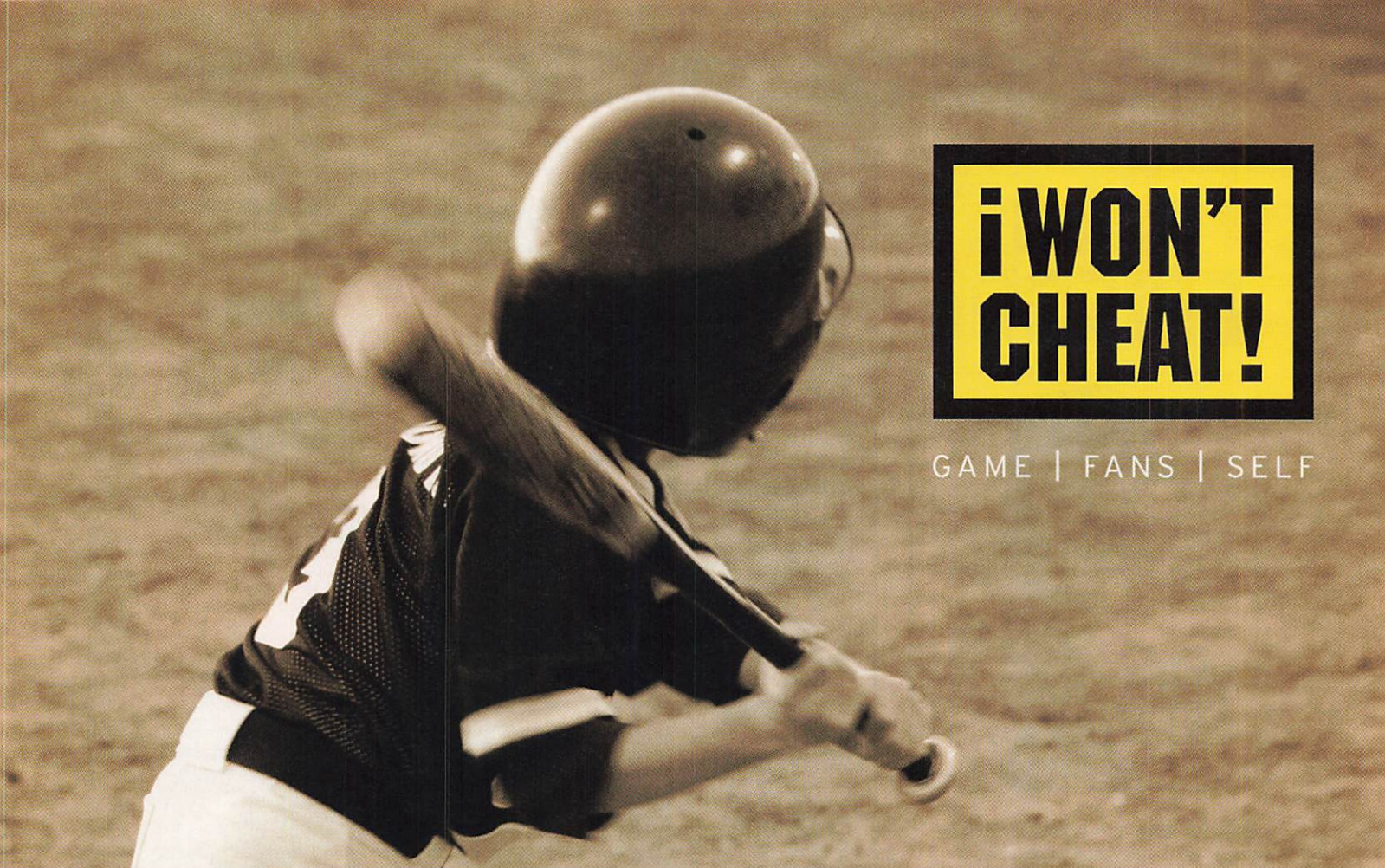
"If you put just the water on the clay without any barrier between their cleats and the clay, it will naturally stick to it," said Mangan. "It makes a good playing cushion on top, to where it can take the water. It also helps keep the sun off the clay so it retains some of the moisture in the clay and in those Turface particles."

Turface, which has been used by major league teams for 43 years, comes from clay mined in Blue Mountain, Mississippi. The manufacturer runs it through an industrial furnace called a calciner at extremely high heat, which removes 95 percent of the moisture from the material. This transforms it into a porous solid, broken down into small particles that trap and hold moisture.

"Those particles soak up water and then release it easier to the air than to the ground," said Mangan. "So it pulls the water out of there, and it keeps the separation barrier. It keeps the clay from getting sticky and muddy."

Turface never gets removed. Over time, it's worked in and becomes part of the infield. When it rains during a game, the ground crew may apply additional Turface to soak up water and reinforce the clay areas. They simply pour it on the field and spread it around. Turface does the rest.

- STEVE FALL



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"Youth athletes who feel the pressure to cheat have been damaged the most by the steroid problem. Let's work together to create a drug free atmosphere in sports."

—Dale Murphy

2 TIME NL MVP, ATLANTA BRAVES

FOUNDER OF THE I WON'T CHEAT FOUNDATION

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KOTSAY COULD BE A GOOD ADDITION IN CENTER

FRANK WREN is on quite a roll, with yet another solid trade: Mark Kotsay for Joey Devine and Jamie Richmond.

Kotsay has been around the block awhile. If his back holds up, he's a solid lefty bat in the middle of the lineup and a quality fielder.

We're all going to miss Andruw Jones. Nobody else played center as gracefully as he did. But adding Kotsay allows the Braves to buy some time with Josh Anderson and Jordan Schafer, two guys who apparently are a big part of the team's future plans.

The toughest part of a deal like this is losing a quality person and player. Devine's Braves career started about as badly as it could have. But he never hung his head and worked his way back to the big leagues. He's a great kid with a fine arm. I hope he has a great run in Oakland.

IT TOOK MAJOR LEAGUE Baseball 18 months for this?

By now, I am sure many of you are familiar with the Mitchell Report, the names in it, the allegations made, and the disappointment with which the report was received.

I have no idea if any of the players named in the report are guilty of what has been alleged. But what I do know is that many names, great and not-so-great, have been ruined, based largely on testimony from a man who is in a lot of trouble himself.

And that is sad.

As I said here months ago with regard to Barry Bonds, until someone can prove that

he broke the rules as established at the time of the infraction, he, and everybody else named, is innocent. At least, that is the way it is supposed to be. But that didn't happen in this case.

This media-driven blood lust to be the story rather than report it is revolting.

We are all complicit in this mess. Fans bought tickets to see how far their favorite slugger could hit home runs. We broadcast and print types promoted these guys and reaped huge ratings rewards. And baseball's owners and union reps saw their industry's value jump by almost \$5 billion dollars in the last 15 years.

I believe Bud Selig and Don Fehr want what is best for the game and for their constituencies. I believe they want a clean game and a testing program that is fair yet firm.

But simply hiring a former senator with no subpoena power, relying on testimony from people either under indictment or about to be, naming names with little proof, discouraging players from telling what they know, and then releasing the report to satisfy media scrutiny isn't what anyone deserves. And I hope it won't take another 18 months for Selig and Fehr to do what is in the best interests of baseball.

SPRING TRAINING is almost upon us, and it's never too early to start handicapping the races.

The NL West is gonna be a dogfight. Colorado won the NL pennant, but I think Arizona's youngsters are going to support their loaded starting pitching. Dan Haren will really help Brandon Webb, and if Randy Johnson comes back with anything, Arizona's starting staff should be awesome. Their 'pen is a concern, but I was impressed with manager Bob Melvin in the playoffs. The Diamondbacks are on their way.

Wanna bet the mortgage on who wins the Central? The Cubs spent the most, and barely squeaked in last year. Milwaukee has the most talent, but melted down in last year's final week. Dusty Baker and Walt Jocketty are in Cincinnati, Houston exiled Brad Lidge, St. Louis exiled Scott Rolen, and, who's managing the Pirates?

I really think it's Brewer time. I love their lineup. They need Ben Sheets healthy, and if Eric Gagne can close, they have a shot to beat the Cubs.

The East? The Phillies took advantage of a massive Mets choke and won last year. They should be favorites because of that. The Mets need pitching desperately and hope to acquire Johan Santana. The Braves are delighted to have Tex and Tommy for a full season.

I think the Phillies and Braves will duel to the final week. How they fare against the Marlins and Nationals determines who heads to the playoffs.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Skip Caray and Chip Caray alternate months in this space, so watch for Skip in March. Chip will be back here in April.

KYB

KNOW YOUR BRAVES

2007 STATISTICS

W-L	ERA	G	SV	IP	H	R	ER	HR	BB	SO
5-3	1.80	80	1	90	65	27	18	6	31	63

PETER MOYLAN

#58

BASICS

FULL NAME PETER MICHAEL MOYLAN
POSITION Relief Pitcher
VITALS
 Bats/Throws Right/Right
 Height 6-2
 Weight 200
 Age 29
BORN December 2, 1978
 Attadale, W. Australia
CONTRACT Eligible for renewal
ACQUIRED Signed by Braves as a minor league free agent on Mar. 10, 2006.

CAREER

ROUNDABOUT ROUTE

Originally signed as a free agent in 1996 by Minnesota, released after two seasons in the minors, and didn't pitch again in America, or anywhere else professionally, for eight years - until signing with the Braves in 2006.

STINGY MATE

Posted a 1.80 ERA in 90 innings last season, only the third Atlanta reliever (Rick Camp 1.91 in 1980 and Tom House 1.92 in 1974) ever to work that much and finish below 2.00.

WORLDLY WAYS

Impressed Braves by striking out four members of Venezuelan team - including major leaguers Bobby Abreu, Marco Scutaro and Magglio Ordonez - in 2006 World Baseball Classic, leading to his signing.

PHOTO



CENTER OF ATTENTION

GENERAL MANAGER FRANK WREN solved the mystery titled "Who's In Center" when he acquired veteran **Mark Kotsay** from Oakland Jan. 14 in exchange for reliever **Joey Devine** and minor league righthander **Jamie Richmond**.

Kotsay and Devine both are former No. 1 draft picks - Kotsay by the Marlins in 1996 (ninth player overall), and Devine by the Braves in 2005 (27th overall).

In Kotsay, the Braves got a hard-nosed player who has a reputation as a true "gamer" and also is regarded as a top-notch teammate and citizen. He's an excellent defensive centerfielder and a .282 career hitter who doesn't hit a lot of home runs but has gap power and gets a lot of extra-base hits.

The only question about the 32-year-old Californian is whether or not he's completely healthy and thus how well he'll hold up over the course of the season. He had back surgery last March to repair a herniated disk and played in only 56 games last year for the A's because of continued problems he attributes to trying to come back too soon. He says he's now fully recovered and he had to pass a physical before the trade was considered official.

Kotsay, who bats and throws left-handed, will be a free agent after the 2008 season, but the Braves have three talented rookies - **Josh Anderson**, **Gregor Blanco** and **Jordan Schafer** - they are bringing along to play center in the future. Part of this deal was that Oakland will pay a large portion of Kotsay's salary.

Though the 6-0, 205-pound Kotsay didn't play much against the Braves the past four years when he was with Oakland, he has plenty of National League experience. He broke in with the

Marlins in 1997 and played three full seasons with them in 1998-2000 before playing three years with the Padres. He got seven games of post-season experience with Oakland in 2006.

Kotsay's best season was 2005 when he batted .280 for the A's with 15 home runs, 35 doubles and a career-high 82 RBIs in 582 at-bats. His career high in home runs is 17 in 2002 with San Diego, and his best batting average of .314 came in 2004 with Oakland.

Kotsay is a good contact hitter who's never struck out more than 89 times in a season. He also has an excellent arm and has ranked among the league leaders in outfield assists throughout his career. Before last season, he had 105 outfield assists since 1998, tops in the majors.

Last year, Kotsay was on the disabled list for the first two months while recovering from surgery, and when he struggled at the plate and experienced back spasms, he went back on the DL in September. Prior to the onset of back problems in 2006, though, he was an extremely durable player.

Devine, 24, was rushed to the majors in August 2005 to help bolster a shaky Braves bullpen as the team was battling for the

post-season. He became the first Brave since **Bob Horner** in 1978 to make it to the majors the year he was drafted. However, he got off to a rough start, giving up grand slams in each of his first two outings. He battled some physical problems and appeared to be on the verge of reaching his potential last year when he was 1-0 with a 1.80 ERA in 10 games for Atlanta and a combined 5-4 with 20 saves and a 1.89 ERA at Mississippi and Richmond with 78 strikeouts, 19 walks and 41 hits in 57 innings.



CAPITAL AFFAIR

The Braves will open the 2008 season on ESPN Sunday Night Baseball Mar. 30 when they help Washington christen new Nationals Park in an 8:05 p.m. game. Originally, Atlanta was supposed to open at Turner Field Mar. 31 against Pittsburgh. However, the one-game road trip to D.C. was arranged to allow the Braves this unique opportunity.

After the season opener, the Braves will return home immediately to prepare for the first game at Turner Field Mar. 31 against the Pirates. Game time and broadcast

details had not been announced at press time. Because of the single game in D.C., the Braves' road trip to Washington in late April has been shortened to two games (April 29-30).

KNEE REPAIR

In order to go into the season at full strength and without nagging knee discomfort, **Mark Teixeira** elected to have arthroscopic surgery on his left knee in November. He had some loose tissue in the knee that caused some discomfort last spring and on and off during the season,

though it wasn't anything that kept him out of the lineup. The Braves and Teixeira do not anticipate his recovery causing any delay in his preparation for spring training or the regular season. The first baseman, who can become a free agent after the '08 season, said he thinks the procedure will prevent him from having any future trouble with the knee.

SPRING INVITEES

The Braves signed **Javy Lopez** to a minor league contract with an invitation to spring training when the 37-year-old former star



catcher will try to win a job as the backup to **Brian McCann**.

Additionally, the Braves invited five of their six-year minor-league free-agent signings to spring camp, including catchers **Corky Miller** and **J.C. Boscan**, outfielder **Joe Borchard**, right-handed pitcher **Jorge Campillo**, and infielder **Javier Guzman**.

Braves pitchers and catchers report to Disney's Wide World of Sports on Feb. 14, and position players report on Feb. 19. The first full-squad workout is Feb. 20.

CLEAN SLATE

No current Braves were named in the report on the use of steroids and other performance-enhancing drugs compiled by former senator **George Mitchell** for Major League Baseball and released in mid-December.

Braves president **John Schuerholz** issued the following statement in response to the report:

"With the release of Senator Mitchell's report and Commissioner Selig's comments on behalf of Major League Baseball, we mark a significant moment in baseball history.

"For too long, all of us - players, teams, media and especially our great fans - have had to hear and read constantly about the issue of use and abuse of performance-enhancing substances.

"We believe the Mitchell Report will allow us to move forward and continue the progress we have seen since Major League Baseball's drug-testing program began in 2002.

"Now we can look forward to a new day in baseball when we can focus on and enjoy this great game and the talented players who play it."

SHORT HOPS

A Brian McCann has been taking yoga classes to help get in condition for the season.

A Chuck James was among the instructors at **Kent Willis'** fifth-annual Straightpath baseball camp in Columbus, Ga., Jan. 12. Willis, the Braves' minor league pitching coordinator, is a Columbus native.

KOTSAY IS HEALTHY AND HE'S AN ULTIMATE PROFESSIONAL

WE SENT TWO YOUNG PLAYERS, pitchers Joey Devine and Jamie Richmond, to Oakland to complete the deal acquiring the contract of centerfielder Mark Kotsay. As I said in my opening press conference when I took the job as general manager, we would love to find a veteran centerfielder to bridge to the years when our young guys are ready to play at this level.

I believe in Mark we found the fundamentally best outfielder available. And he's been fundamentally outstanding from the time he played at Cal State Fullerton, all through the minor leagues and into his major league career. We lost a true professional in Edgar Renteria, but we got a true professional in Mark Kotsay.

I've talked to Bobby Cox, and he's thrilled. The players I spoke to at FanFest were thrilled. This is a good acquisition for us.

Mark was always on our list, he was always on our radar. But we didn't know what Oakland was going to do. Early in the off-season, the A's hadn't made their decision on what direction their club would take.

That didn't really happen until right before the holidays when they traded Dan Haren. At that point, we knew they'd be rebuilding, and I began to talk to (Oakland GM) Billy Beane. But Mark was always on our list of players we would like to get.

Prior relationships (Wren and Kotsay were both in the Marlins organization) always play a part when you're looking at players for trades, and you rely on those relationships when you're gathering information.

So, through the minor leagues, we saw the type of player Mark was, and it's all-inclusive, from the way he plays the game to the leadership he demonstrates on the field. And he's been that way since he was in college. It's only gotten stronger during his career, and he has become more and more respected around baseball.

I think acquiring Mark takes care of the major things on the list of what we wanted to accomplish. There are a few other small things we'd like to do, but getting a veteran centerfielder puts our club in the kind of shape we want to be in going to spring training. There's always a sense of relief when the club comes together.

In terms of Mark and his physical, everything I'd been led to believe, both in talking to Billy (Beane) and talking to Mark, held true, though obviously you have to make sure. So, there are those few tense moments as he went through the physical, and we were very relieved when we heard that he passed. He not only had our normal orthopedic exam, but also was seen by our back specialist. He was examined on two levels. Both checked his back and were comfortable in recommending him.

We didn't envision getting someone of Mark's quality, but we felt the club really needed an experienced centerfielder. In order to get something good, you have to give up something good, and that's what happened with giving up Joey Devine and Jamie Richmond.

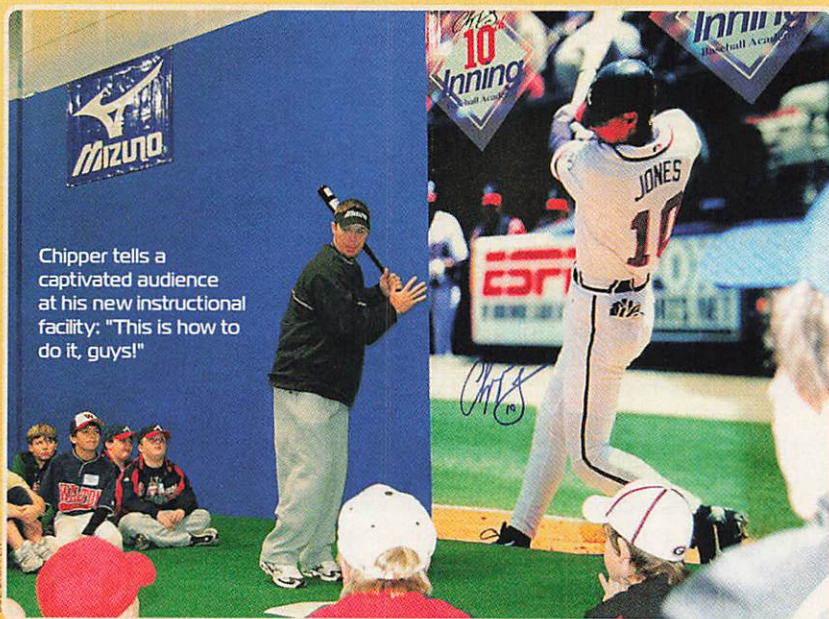
Mark really brings professionalism. He's a "baseball player." You can't have enough "baseball players." That sounds simplistic, but it describes this guy. He's an ultimate professional.

Mark Teixeira had some minor work done on his knee, but it's of no concern. He's right on target with his regular workout program. It's a non-issue.

We were impressed by the initiative Javy Lopez took to get in shape and work on his deficiencies on defense. He took it upon himself to work with Chino Cadahia to improve, and Chino says he has made great strides in that area. It's a very worthwhile gamble to bring him into a non-roster situation with a chance to make the team. If he's even 75 percent of what he was, he'll be better than most backup catchers and would give us a real threat with his bat off the bench.

“GETTING A VETERAN CENTERFIELDER PUTS OUR CLUB IN THE KIND OF SHAPE WE WANT TO BE IN GOING TO SPRING TRAINING”

CHIPPER'S PLACE



Chipper tells a captivated audience at his new instructional facility: "This is how to do it, guys!"

CHIPPER JONES is venturing into the educational business, albeit baseball education. On Dec. 22, he participated in the grand opening of the new Chipper Jones' 10th Inning Baseball Academy by hosting a clinic at the facility in the Atlanta suburb of Suwanee.

The baseball "school" is located at the corner of Satellite Blvd. and Lawrenceville Suwanee Rd. Call (678) 714-1000 or visit 10thinningbaseball.com for additional information.

The academy is open year-round for baseball and softball instruction through clinics and individual tutoring. Chipper is part of the ownership group. The general manager of the facility is **Al Goetz**, a scouting supervisor for the Braves the last seven years. He is credited with signing **Brian McCann**, **Jeff Francoeur** and **Chuck James**, among others.

WINTER FESTIVITIES

Jerry Lynch, one of the greatest pinch-hitters in history, will be among the honored guests Feb. 2 at the Braves 400 Club's annual winter banquet. Lynch will receive the **Luke Appling** Nostalgia Award, named after the former Braves coach who also was a Hall of Fame second baseman with the White Sox.

Lynch was a .277 hitter in a 13-year career with Pittsburgh and Cincinnati from 1954-66. He hit 18 career pinch-hit home runs, a National League record, and he had 25 pinch-hit RBIs in 1961 for Cincinnati, still tied for both the NL and major league record.

The theme of the evening's festivities, to be emceed by Braves Hall of Famer **Pete Van Wieren**, is "30 years of TBS and the Braves." Among those who have committed to attend are Braves Hall of Famer **Skip Caray** and his son, **Chip Caray**.

Former TBS broadcasters, as well as players who participated in the top 10 Braves moments in TBS history, will be celebrated by personal accounts and in a

video presentation. According to **Wayne Coleman** of the 400 Club, **Rick Camp**, the weak-hitting pitcher who hit an 18th-inning home run to prolong the memorable Independence Day game of 1985 for another inning, will be among those attending.

Hall of Famer **Phil Niekro** has also confirmed he'll be at the event that begins at 5:30 with a silent auction and reception, followed by a dinner and awards program at 7 at the Marriott Century Center located just off at I-85 North at Clairmont Rd. The event is open to the public. Tickets are \$65 each. Call (770) 416-4539 or visit braves400.org for tickets or additional information.

The Braves organizational awards also will be presented to the top farm system performers from last season, including **Jo-Jo Reyes** and **Jordan Schafer** (see page 48 for more details).

AT THE PODIUM

Chipper Jones will serve as the featured speaker at Georgia Tech's Baseball Benefit Dinner on Saturday, Feb. 9, at the Georgia

Tech Hotel and Conference Center. The annual event includes live and silent auctions in the hotel ballroom.

Previous speakers at the event include **John Smoltz**, **Mark Teixeira** and **John Schuerholz**. All proceeds benefit the school's nationally competitive baseball program. Tickets are \$75 apiece. Registration and the auctions begin at 6:30 p.m., followed by dinner and the program at 7:30 p.m.

For more information or to reserve a seat, call or e-mail **Nick Scherer** (404) 894-2261 and nscherer@athletics.gatech.edu or **Ethan Shapiro** (404) 894-5410 and eshapiro@athletics.gatech.edu. Or send a check (payable to GTAA) to: Georgia Tech Athletic Association, Attn: GT Baseball Benefit Dinner, 150 Bobby Dodd Way NW, Atlanta, Ga. 30332-0455. If mailing a check, include the number of people attending, an e-mail address, a mailing address, and daytime phone number.

HIGHER EDUCATION

While he was in Atlanta from his home in



Texas for FanFest Jan. 12-13, **Mark Teixeira** stopped at his old baseball home of Georgia Tech to speak to players attending baseball coach **Danny Hall's** Winter Baseball Camp. Teixeira, it should come as no surprise, spoke at the hitting camp. He was a third baseman for the Yellow Jackets from 1999-2001. His wife, **Leigh**, also is a Georgia Tech graduate.

MURPHY SNUBBED

Once again, **Dale Murphy** fell far short of gaining election into the National Baseball Hall of Fame. In his 10th year on the ballot, Murphy received 75 votes of the 543 cast by members of the Baseball Writers Association of America. His 13.8 percent ranked 14th in this year's voting, which required 75 percent approval for election. Only relief pitcher **Rich "Goose" Gossage** was admitted to the Cooperstown shrine.

Murphy can remain on the ballot five more years. If he's not elected, he could then be considered by the Veterans Committee. The good news is that Murphy's 13.8 percent of the vote was the highest he's received since 2002, when he got 14.8 percent. The best percentage he's received came in 2000, his second year on the ballot, when 23.2 percent of the voters marked his name on their ballots.

BALLS & STRIKES

A Red Sox executive **Dick Berardino** received the Judge **Emil Fuchs** Award for long and meritorious service to baseball Jan. 17 from the Boston chapter of the Baseball Writers Association of America. Fuchs owned the Braves from 1926-35.

A **Bobby Cox** and former Braves chairman **Bill Bartholomay**, a member of the Braves Hall of Fame, were to be honored by the Professional Baseball Scouts Foundation at its annual gala Jan. 19 in Los Angeles. The annual charity event has helped raise more than \$1 million to assist baseball scouts in need in its previous four years.

A The **Warren Spahn** Award Gala originally scheduled for Jan. 24 in Guthrie, Okla., was postponed until Jan. 30 to allow 2007 winner **C.C. Sabathia** of the Cleveland Indians to attend.

I'M NOT DECIDING NOW IF THIS IS MY LAST YEAR

THE BRAVES LOST AN IMPORTANT GUY when my good friend Jim Beauchamp died on December 25. Jim was one of the most influential people in the area of player development for the past 15 years. He was a good friend. He was my buddy.

I met him in 1967. We played on the same team in Richmond. He fought his illness hard and always followed and loved the Braves. The organization will miss him, and so will I.

I'm honestly not sure if the 2008 season will be my last. I haven't thought about it and really don't think about it unless someone asks!

I've always had a relaxed relationship with the Braves regarding my status. It's that way now with Frank (Wren). I'm not making any announcements at this time.

We believe we have a solid centerfielder in Mark Kotsay. We haven't seen as much of him in the past few years since he played with the Oakland A's, but we used to see quite a bit of him when he played with the Florida Marlins (1997-2000).

He's a guy with a tremendous amount of talent and great makeup. He's a solid player, but it's his makeup that makes him attractive. He'll be a good addition.

A couple of our pitchers who had tough times last season are on the mend and looking to come back. Mike Hampton's hamstring is completely healed, and he's ready to go.

I heard that Chuck James is feeling better. His shoulder had given him trouble last season. Turns out he had a small tear in his rotator cuff, though he wasn't making excuses. He didn't need surgery, and he's worked really hard this off-season and should be ready to compete at spring training.

I'll head to Florida around February 9, and we hit the ground running with pitchers and catchers when they report on the 14th.

We have a great deal of pitching depth, along the lines of what we've had in the past. These aren't big name guys, and some of them are young, but they have real talent. We know our guys, but we're really interested in seeing those guys we haven't gotten to watch a lot.

For example, it seems like everywhere I go, even when I went to a banquet in Syracuse, N.Y., people are telling me about Jair Jurrjens, a pitcher we got from Detroit. He's one guy I really want to look at.

My days in spring training start very early. I'm at the ballpark by 6 a.m., usually. And the other coaches are there early, too. We meet every day prior to workouts to set up schedules, groups for hitting or fielding practice. We want to set everything up in advance so we're all on the same page and there isn't a bunch of down time.

We spend a lot of time moving from the field, to the cages, to the back fields, and to the bullpen, so we can watch everyone getting their work. We have players that come in at 7 a.m. and start working on the back fields. Our full squad workouts officially start at 10 a.m., and we usually finish by 1 or 2 o'clock in the afternoon.

The coaches let me know what they've seen. I tell them what I've seen. Between all of us, we get a good idea of the strengths and weaknesses of players and our team.

I know the players are just like me, eager to get to Florida, eager to get the new season started. We all get antsy at this time of year.

“IT SEEMS LIKE EVERYWHERE I GO... PEOPLE ARE TELLING ME ABOUT JAIR JURRJENS. HE'S ONE GUY I REALLY WANT TO LOOK AT.”

OH, COME ALL YE FAITHFUL

RECORD CROWDS FLOCK TO MID-JANUARY EXTRAVAGANZA

BY MARTHA PAYNE

Martha Payne is an occasional contributor to *ChopTalk* and author of *"Put Him In, Coach: A Mother's All-Star Memoir"* (iUniverse, 186 pages).

WHEN THE BRAVES ANNOUNCED they would hold the 2008 FanFest inside for the first time - at the Georgia World Congress Center - it seemed turnout would be high Jan. 12-13. With its draw of star player autographs and photo ops, FanFest was popular even on those wet, dreary January week-ends at Turner Field in years past. Factor in more space for more Braves stars, add controlled temps and interactive stations where fans could slam home runs and "throw with the pros," set up concessions galore and museum booths and a mobile Clubhouse Store, and who knew how many of the Braves' faithful would show?

To be exact (or close to it), 25,000 strong.

9:30 A.M., SATURDAY: My coffee tumbler steaming beside me, I made my leisurely way down I-75, thinking I'd beat the crowds. Surely, even the most zealous fans would linger abed on this bright, chilly morning. For heaven's sake, they had all day - and Sunday - to get their pre-season Braves fix. Why hurry to be there at 10 when the gates open?

Then I saw the brake lights, a long line of them sloping up the exit ramp, amber turn signals flashing as car after car followed the arrows to the GWCC. I crept to a parking spot and hurried to the entrance, marveling en route at the throng, the sheer numbers of fans happily



awaiting their chance to mingle with their heroes and dream of spring and the return of Braves baseball.

Young fans, old fans, middle-aged, too... walking, skipping, pushed in strollers or wheelchairs, slung in baby backpacks... all proudly wearing their Braves' gear - logo caps, hair scrunchies, #7 jerseys, #10...

Inside, a thick queue snaked along what organizers dubbed Braves Boulevard, turned down Niekro Way, looped around Smoltz and Aaron Drives... I checked my venue map and, in disbelief, realized this was the line for the autograph stages in the far corners of the exhibition hall.

Such a daunting wait!

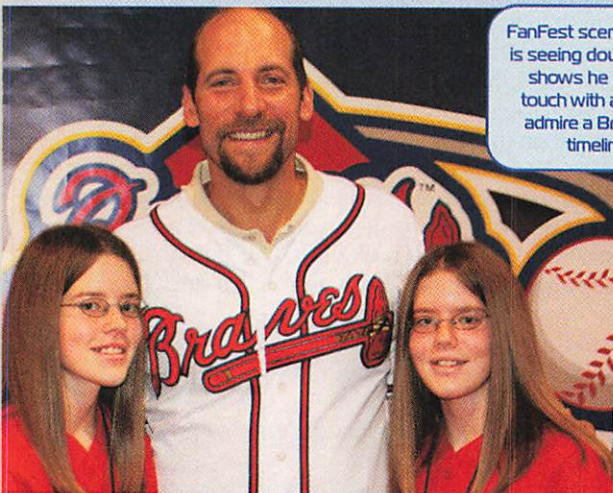
10:15: Autograph Stage One. "Who is it?" I asked a Braves host. "Don't know yet," he explained. "We're working on a Treasure Hunt system. First player will sign for an hour, then another star shows up. That way, all the kids don't crowd around and end up disappointed when the player has to leave."

Above the crowd's chatter, I heard a catchy tune... the Jeopardy theme song? On the Trivia Stage, four fans at podiums waved tomahawks and spouted facts and figures from Braves history. Veteran Braves usher and trivia hound, Walter Banks, finished each round by recalling a defining Braves moment.

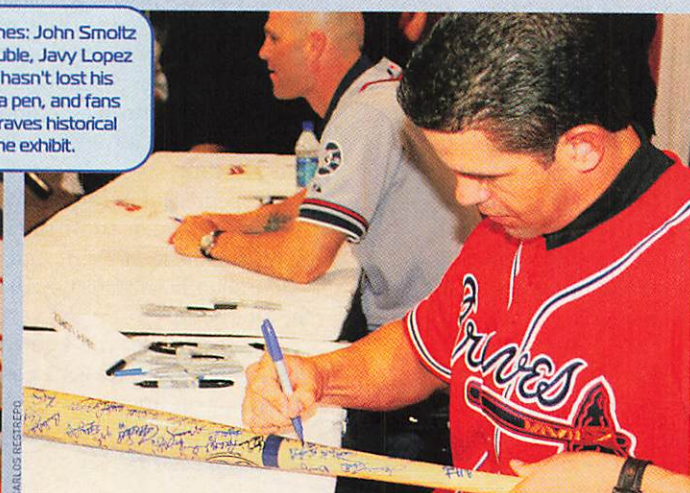
"Three!" a contestant shouted.

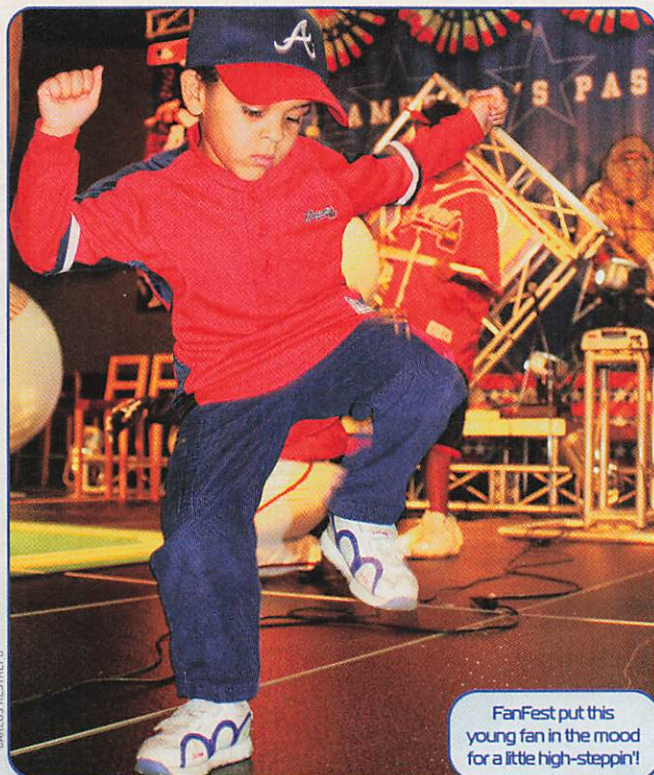
"Three," repeated Banks. "The Braves are the only franchise to win World Series titles in three different cities."

10:25: A rumble arose near Autograph Stage Two... a collective



FanFest scenes: John Smoltz is seeing double, Javy Lopez shows he hasn't lost his touch with a pen, and fans admire a Braves historical timeline exhibit.





FanFest put this young fan in the mood for a little high-steppin'!

breath was taken, then high-pitched screams erupted... "Good morning, Braves fans! Let's welcome Brian McCann and Jeff Francoeur!"

Beside me, a couple of 20-something girls twittered, then scanned the switchback line where thrilled fans strained against restraining ropes.

"Let's go!" one of them shouted, and they were off.

To my right, a second swell of cheers rose... "And at Autograph Stage One, let's welcome back, Tom Glavine!" With this, my heart skipped. I hustled over and snapped a few photos of the returning hero, laughing with fans, tussling kids' hair, home again.

"How long did you wait?" I asked a young mother of twin boys from Michigan. "An hour and a half," she said, a smile on her face. Since an hour before the gates opened, that is.

"But it's worth it," she added.

11:30: Meandering along Smoltz Drive, I caught a sugary whiff...

funnel cake! And more - aromas of pizza, popcorn, hot dogs, ice cream...

Just ahead, a cozy group of fans sprawled across kid-sized armchairs and lounged on an expanse of soft carpet. A place to rest! But wait... on a stage above them, in a slightly larger armchair, sat Brian Jordan, reading aloud?

I'd found the Braves' Reading Dugout, where Jordan, a recently published author, read with great pride from his children's book, "I Told You I Could Play".

A while later, Francoeur and wife, Catie, shared this wee stage for a reading of "The Little Engine That Could."

"My mother, brother, sister and wife are all teachers," Francoeur said, a twinkle in his boyish eye. "I have no choice but to love to read."

His multi-generational audience - one that spilled far beyond the carpet - cheered with glee, while at his feet, a young fan in pink bows and pigtails, a baseball airbrushed on her cheek, a thumb in her mouth, snuggled in her mother's lap.

"Say it with us," Francoeur encouraged, turning the last page.

"I think I can! I think I can!" the crowd chanted.

12:45: I strolled back up Aaron Drive. Whoops and shouts rang from the Player Photo Booth, where a woman practically tackled McCann as he emerged from behind a curtain. "Cheese!" Then a bright flash, a hug, and she had a moment to take home. On the Comcast Field at the end of (Eddie) Mathews Way, clad in jeans and street shoes, Glavine threw a round of Wiffle ball BP to eager Little Leaguers.

1:30: Waves of fans pushed past me. I turned. The rows of seating near the Main Stage were full. And on the stage? With a pair of shades balanced on his visor, it was Chipper Jones, perched beside Pete Van Wieren for a Q&A session.

"Do you have any goals as a player you have yet to achieve?" asked a fan.

"I'm known for my bat," Chipper said. "But as hard as I work on my defense, I'd love to win a Gold Glove before I retire."

Next at the mic was young Jake from Canton. "You're my favorite player!" he exclaimed. "Can you come over to my house and teach me how to play?"

Chipper paused while the crowd's laughter subsided, then answered, his tone soft but serious, "It's an honor to be your favorite player and I'll have my agent call you to set that up, okay?"

Such was the magic of FanFest 2008.



Will Ohman (R), the new lefty reliever, gets acquainted with Braves fans while Chris Resop, another new reliever, signs.



PLAYING
PEPPER



JAVY LOPEZ

Lopez has the same smile but says he has a totally different outlook and would be content to make the roster as a backup.



Just weeks after re-signing franchise icon Tom Glavine, the Braves offered a minor league contract and spring-training invitation to former catcher and fan favorite Javy Lopez. An 11-year veteran of the Braves, Lopez used free agency to sign with the Orioles in 2004, but endured "frustrating" times in Baltimore and then Boston over the next three seasons. Cut from the Colorado Rockies last spring training, Lopez, now 37, spent 2007 out of the game but stayed fit enough to attract the attention of the Braves' front office. Shortly after Lopez signed, *ChopTalk* visited with the three-time All-Star at the high school field south of Atlanta where he's been working out with Braves bench coach Chino Cadahia, and discussed the past, the future, and why he believes the Braves might just be the best organization in baseball.

INTERVIEW BY JAY BUSBEE

CHOPTALK: How do you feel to be back with the Braves organization?

JAVY LOPEZ: One of my main goals this year after missing all of 2007 was just to get an opportunity with any team in the big leagues. The fact that it's the Braves giving me the break, the chance to play, is even better. I've got the chance to stay at home, to stay with the team that I came up with. I know everybody - the front office, the manager, the coaches - and everybody's made me feel like I'm at home. It's been a blessing for me, not only to get back into baseball, but to be here - home.

CT: Did you think your career was over after getting cut by the Rockies last spring?

LOPEZ: No. In my mind, I knew I had a lot more baseball to offer. I never thought I was going to quit. Well... at some point, the frustration [in Baltimore] was so big I thought about it, but I also thought, this cannot be happening. My career cannot end this way. I'm pretty sure everybody knows when it's time to retire, and I didn't feel like that was my time. Physically, mentally, totally - I was

well, I felt good. I never quit. I just took the year off and came back with a totally different mentality - being a backup catcher trying to make the team.

CT: What did you do during your year off?

I'M PRETTY SURE EVERYBODY KNOWS WHEN IT'S TIME TO RETIRE, AND I DIDN'T FEEL LIKE THAT WAS MY TIME.

LOPEZ: Stayed in shape. I did a lot of work with weights, so that when I got closer to spring training, I didn't have to work as hard to keep my body in shape. It was tough, missing playing baseball, but at the same time I got to do things I hadn't done in many years, both working out and spending time with my family.

CT: From a player's perspective, what do the Braves have as an organization that the other teams you played for didn't have?

LOPEZ: Their routine. Every year, it's the same routine. It's never changed, whether they're doing well or doing bad. It's so well organized, starting in spring training. With the Orioles, I needed to ask every day where I'm going, which ballpark, what we're doing... It was such a mess. Compared to

that, with the Braves you knew where you were going every day. You knew what you were doing every day.

CT: What role did [friend, bullpen coach and former teammate] Eddie Perez play in you getting a spring training invitation?

LOPEZ: Before Eddie went to Venezuela [to coach, January '08 CT], I asked him if Chino Cadahia was staying here in Atlanta. In the past, living here I couldn't think of anybody I could call to work with on my



In preparation for his comeback attempt, Lopez worked on his catching mechanics with bench coach Chino Cadahia during the off-season.

PLAYING PEPPER



ATLANTA BRAVES

catching skills. Colorado, before they signed me [in early 2007], wanted me to go to California to work out. I liked the program they had me on, but I didn't want to have to fly to California for it. So I called Chino, and I was very thankful that he wanted to work with me. He said, "Let's go ahead and work out." And ever since we started working out, everything's working out for me!

CT: What role is Chino playing in your workout routine?

LOPEZ: He's working with me on defense, on making throws. He's not going to give the Braves [an inaccurate] report on me. He doesn't want to look bad, and I don't want to make him look bad. Before I worked with Chino, I was working with a personal trainer who got me into the best condition I'd ever had in my career. Since I took a year off, I had more time to spend working out, rather than playing baseball and every once in awhile working out. When I wasn't lifting weights, I was doing speed training, and that got me into the best shape of my career.

So, when Chino saw I was in tremendous condition, he was a little bit impressed. He liked the way I was throwing, what I was showing him to do all the little work to get

me back with the Braves as a backup catcher. He's helped me with mechanics, throwing to the bases. These are things that I learned 15 years ago, but unless someone reminds you of it, unless you practice it, you can forget it. Chino is bringing it all back to me.

CT: What has Chino done behind the scenes to help get you back in with the Braves organization?

“ WHEN I WASN'T LIFTING WEIGHTS, I WAS DOING SPEED TRAINING, AND THAT GOT ME INTO THE BEST SHAPE OF MY CAREER. ”

LOPEZ: He has no control on whether the Braves sign me or not. It started with me saying, "Chino, do you know anybody around the league you could give some reports [of my performance]?" He said, "Nah, I want you here." That's his main purpose. If it doesn't happen here, he's willing to talk to whoever, maybe [former Braves coach and current Florida manager] Fredi Gonzalez with the Marlins, maybe Kansas City. Whatever team it ends up being, he'll give [an honest] report about how I'm feeling, how I'm throwing. Fortunately enough, [Braves general manager] Frank Wren

Javy and the Braves hope he still has many more opportunities to display his home run trot

trusts what Chino told him.

CT: Will you be playing any winter ball this season?

LOPEZ: No. The seasons are almost over. And what I want to do is get my body in shape rather than just playing games. I played baseball for 20 years in a row and wasn't ever really getting my body in shape. Taking the year off was the best thing to recharge the battery. I've worked out in a batting cage, so I've been working three ways - physically, defensively, and offensively. I'm totally ready.

CT: You're now 37 years old. What do you know going into spring training at your age that you didn't know as a rookie?

LOPEZ: Going in, I'm in a lot better shape and ready to roll. In the past, spring training was a time to start getting ready. This time, I've started all that a lot earlier.

CT: What's your biggest concern about your comeback?

LOPEZ: I want to make sure I don't disappoint anyone. I've been working out for so long that I've built up confidence in myself, and I know that a lot of people have confidence in me. So, I'm trying hard to not worry about anything, to keep my mind straight up and do what I have to do.

CT: How's it going to feel being back in uniform with John Smoltz, Chipper Jones and Tom Glavine?

LOPEZ: It'll be a flashback! I hope I'll be

part of the reason the team's spirit will go up again and we'll be back in the playoffs again. But I'm trying to be the backup catcher now. [Brian] McCann's still the starting catcher, and hopefully I'll be able to help him any way I can.

CT: Have you thought about how the fans will respond to you if you make it back to Turner Field?

LOPEZ: I don't know how they're going to respond. Hopefully, good. So far, everybody I've talked to and seen around is glad to have me back.

CT: You were going through some difficult off-field times during your on-field struggles in Baltimore. How has getting remarried affected your outlook on baseball?

LOPEZ: For the better, all for the better. All the bad times are gone, on and off the

field, and right now my kids, my wife, my family are all perfect. I cannot ask for a better situation.

CT: So, your kids are excited about you possibly playing for the Braves again?

LOPEZ: They love it. My wife and kids and I are going to Puerto Rico to enjoy family down there before spring training. And now

LOPEZ: Andruw [Jones] called to congratulate me, but he was kind of mad because he's leaving! Bobby Cox and [trainer] Jeff Porter called and wished me luck. I'm looking forward to seeing the rest of the guys in Florida.

CT: If it doesn't work out with the Braves, are you prepared to try to catch on with another team?

**I'VE BEEN WORKING THREE WAYS -
PHYSICALLY, DEFENSIVELY, AND OFFENSIVELY.
I'M TOTALLY READY.**

that I know where I'll be for the next few months, the winter's a lot better.

CT: Did you talk to anybody with the Braves after you got the invitation to spring training?

LOPEZ: Definitely. I will try to shoot for some other team. I can control myself, my preparation, and my conditioning, but I have no control over the decision [of a major-league contract with the Braves]. If it doesn't happen, it doesn't happen. But I hope it happens.

The owner of 260 career home runs, Lopez could give the Braves a potent bat in reserve if he can make the club.



ATLANTA BRAVES

AMERICA'S TEAM LIVES!

FROM COAST TO COAST, ALL GAMES ARE AVAILABLE ON TV AND RADIO WITH A LITTLE INITIATIVE

BY CAROL CARTER

NO MATTER WHERE YOU LIVE, it's possible to watch and/or listen to all 162 Braves games this season.

That's right!

It's possible for fans throughout the United States to see and/or listen to as many games in 2008 as they have since Ted Turner began transforming the Braves into "America's Team" in 1976.

In fact, those fans outside the Southeast who have settled in recent years for just 70 games on the Superstation and a handful of national telecasts by ESPN and Fox can take advantage of the "call to action" issued by TBS dropping Braves baseball to more than double the number of games they watch and/or listen to this season.

Access to Braves broadcasts has changed, for sure, but the concept of "America's Team" is still very much alive for those who want it.

TBS had been reducing its number of telecasts for several years, bottoming out at 70 games the last two seasons before severing ties with the Braves. This year, the only baseball on TBS will be 26 Sunday afternoon games chosen from the entire Major League Baseball schedule. It's possible that the Braves occasionally will be featured in the Sunday schedule, but there is no guarantee of that.

So, fans - especially those outside the five-and-a-half-state area designated by MLB as Braves franchise territory (see map) - must find other ways to follow the team. Fortunately, it isn't that difficult. It just takes some basic information, initiative and some money.

The possible sources for Braves broadcasts are wide-ranging and include television, radio and the internet. Following is a guide to help determine how to follow the Braves this season and what is needed to make sure not to miss a single game. Believe it - because you can do it!

Let's start by dividing this guide to Braves Watching into three sections, based on geography. Which applies to you?

A - For Atlanta. Fans who live in the metropolitan Atlanta area.

SE - For Southeast. Fans who live in Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, South Carolina and western North Carolina. This is the region defined by Major League Baseball as the area where the Braves franchise has territorial rights. As such, it is the area where the regional networks - Fox Sports Net South and SportSouth are permitted to show their telecasts. This

is done to protect the interests of other MLB franchises - just as McDonald's protects the territory of its franchisees.

U.S. - For United States. Fans who live anywhere in the United States outside the five-and-a-half-state area outlined in SE.

Now let's look at the options for fans in each area.

A - ATLANTA

Fans in metro Atlanta have the best of all worlds, of course. They can watch 81 games in person at Turner Field, if they'd like, and they also have access to all games on radio and TV.

SPORTSOUTH (80 GAMES)

Telecasting 80 Braves games this season, SportSouth reaches more than 9 million homes in six states: Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina and western North Carolina. Channel numbers in the Atlanta area are: Comcast, 53; Charter, 36; AT&T, 66; Dish Network, 437; and DIRECTV, 631. Joe Simpson and Jon Sciambi are the primary announcers.

PEACHTREE TV (45 GAMES)

Peachtree TV - Channel 17 in Atlanta - will carry 45 Braves games this season, with the schedule due to be published closer to Opening Day. While the station is unable to break down its coverage area on a county-by-county basis, a spokesperson says that if Atlanta-area fans get Channel 17 - now WPCH instead of WTBS - then they will get Peachtree TV and the Braves games with announcers Chip Caray, Skip Caray and Joe Simpson.

FSN SOUTH (25 GAMES)

Broadcasting 25 Braves games in 2008, FSN South reaches more than 12 million homes in Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi. Joe Simpson and Jon Sciambi are the primary announcers.

ESPN AND FOX NETWORK (12 GAMES*)

Some Braves games will be featured on ESPN Sunday nights and on some weekdays. The same is true for Saturday games on Fox Sports. Check local listings for this information.

* Subject to scheduling.

LOCAL CABLE PROVIDERS

Various packages are available from local cable providers. In Atlanta, Comcast subscribers, for example, will get the 45 games being shown on Peachtree TV and any Fox Network games on the Comcast Basic Cable account for \$18.95. FSN South, SportSouth and ESPN are available through the Full Basic package for \$52.50. The number to call to subscribe is 404-COMCAST (266-2278).

THE SCHEDULE

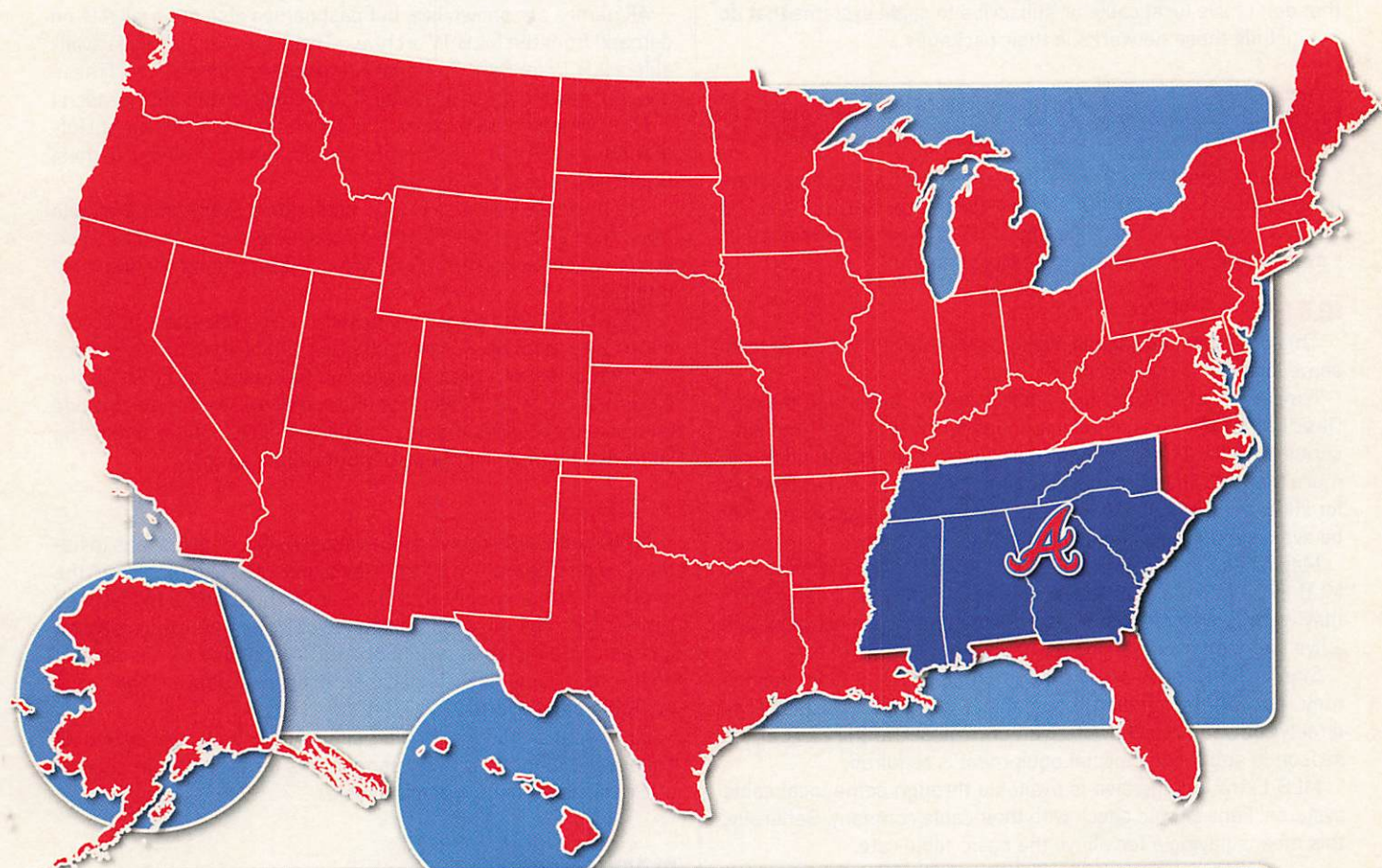
The schedule of which games will be on each network has not been finalized. It will be published in ChopTalk as soon as it is available.

BRAVES NETWORK RADIO

The largest radio affiliate network in Major League Baseball, Braves Network Radio broadcasts all games into Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The flagship stations are Clear Channel's WGST-AM (640) and The Bull (94.9 FM) in Atlanta.

Once the local network affiliates are lined up for this year, a list will be published in ChopTalk and also at braves.com. Check closer to Opening Day. Pete Van Wieren and Skip Caray are the primary announcers.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



		SPORTSOUTH (80 GAMES), PEACHTREE TV (45 GAMES), FSN SOUTH (25 GAMES), ESPN & FOX NETWORK (12 GAMES)
		BRAVES NETWORK RADIO (162 GAMES)
		SPORTSOUTH (80 GAMES), FSN SOUTH (25 GAMES), ESPN & FOX NETWORK (12 GAMES)
		BRAVES NETWORK RADIO (162 GAMES)
		*MLB EXTRA INNINGS (100+ GAMES IN 2007)
		RM RADIO (162 GAMES)
		*MLB.TV & MLB AUDIO (162 GAMES)

* BLACKOUT RULES APPLY

SE - SOUTHEAST

For the most part, see above. Most fans in the five-and-a-half-state Braves region can get the 80 games on SportSouth, the 25 on FSN South, and the 12 likely set for ESPN and Fox Network with a local cable package. What they may not be able to get are the 45 games on Peachtree TV.

However, discussions are under way about providing Comcast customers only in this five-and-a-half-state region with those 45 games via Comcast Sports Southeast at the Full Basic rate of \$52.50.

Stay tuned to see if this option fully develops. If it doesn't, then fans in this area will have to take advantage of some of the alternate sources outlined below in U.S. The same applies for SE fans that don't have local cable or subscribe to cable systems that do not include these networks in their packages.

U.S.

The fans outside the Braves' five-and-a-half-state region have to be the most enterprising. But, as pointed out earlier, it can be done. All games are available - by at least one source or another - everywhere. Here's where to go to find them.

MLB EXTRA INNINGS

This premium package is available through DirecTV and from some local cable providers.

Fans who subscribe to digital satellite television through DirecTV may pay an additional amount (\$199.96 in 2007) and subscribe to MLB Extra Innings. Last year, this service delivered more than 100 Braves games. Though the exact number isn't set for 2008, a DirecTV spokesman says that most Braves games will be available this year to out-of-market customers.

Major League Baseball selects which games are available to MLB Extra Innings, then subscribers pick which of those games they want to watch. More than 60 games per week are available - live - though they are subject to blackout restrictions.

Sign up for DirecTV and MLB Extra Innings (MLB Extra Innings may not be purchased separately) at 1-800-DIRECTV or directv.com. You may have to wait until closer to the start of the season to subscribe. Special equipment is required.

MLB Extra Innings also is available through some local cable systems. Fans should check with their cable company. Generally, this means paying a fee above the basic cable rate.

XM RADIO

XM Satellite Radio - broadcast nationwide with zero blackout restrictions - carries every Atlanta Braves game. It doesn't matter if fans live in Atlanta or Albuquerque, Macon or Milwaukee, they can hear all the Braves games on XM, wherever they are.

Fans can listen to XM on satellite radios for car, home, office or on a portable unit. That means, of course, buying a special radio - so there is the first cost. The second is a subscription to XM, which runs \$12.95 per month. Sign up is available at 1-800-XM-Radio or xmradio.com.

XM radios are sold at consumer electronics retail stores or online at xmradio.com. Prices vary from around \$60 (with mail-in rebates) up to more than \$200. But the money buys more than baseball. XM Radio offers 170 channels of sports, music, news,

talk and entertainment. For dedicated baseball fans, XM also carries games for every other Major League Baseball team, and it broadcasts baseball talk radio that reports on the sport 24 hours a day, every day. Fans interested in XM Radio who are in the market for a new vehicle might want to consider that XM Radio comes pre-installed on 140 different models of cars and trucks.

More information is available at xmradio.com/mlb.

MLB.TV

Targeted to displaced fans, MLB.TV enables subscribers to get all the Braves games, with blackout restrictions. Broadcast via a high-speed internet connection, MLB.TV is linked not to an address but to an account, which means subscribers can watch the games on their home computers or - if they are traveling - on laptops assigned to the same account.

All games are shown live, but past games also are available on demand from the MLB.TV archives. There are two packages available: MLB.TV for \$89.95, and MLB.TV Premium for \$119.95. (These are 2007 prices, which are subject to change for the 2008 season.)

MLB.TV subscribers get 2,430 games online - 90 live out-of-market games per week - plus select spring training games, Game Day Audio, and more.

The premium package brings subscribers everything available from MLB.TV plus Mosaic, a bit of technology that enables viewers to watch six games at one time. Subscriptions are available mlb.com.

MLB.TV blacks out games based on zip codes and in accordance with team broadcast territories established by MLB. Once the regular season package goes on sale, fans can check at the bottom of the MLB.TV page (at MLB.com) to see if their zip code falls on either team's (home or opposing) blackout list. If their zip code is not on the list, they will not be blacked out.

MLB AUDIO

MLB Audio, also known as Gameday Audio, enables fans to listen to every game - with zero blackout restrictions - over the internet from anywhere they have an account and a high-speed connection. The cost: approximately \$14 for the entire season (prices could increase for 2008). MLB Audio also comes as part of the premium MLB.TV package explained above. Sign up is available at mlb.com.

Fans who subscribe to Gameday Audio have the option of choosing the home or away announcers for every game, as well as Spanish language when available.

BLACKOUT RULES

Blackout rules for Major League Baseball are complex and confusing, but fans subscribing to services such as MLB.TV and MLB Extra Innings should be aware that blackout restrictions do apply to some games. However, they do not apply to games broadcast on radio.

This means that a Braves fan living in New York could experience a blackout of a Braves-Mets game even if they have paid for MLB.TV or MLB Extra Innings. However, it is possible that a game blacked out from MLB.TV or MLB Extra Innings would be available from a local cable provider.

Braves games on both MLB.TV and MLB Extra Innings also will be blacked out when the Braves are featured on ESPN Sunday night games that begin after 5 p.m. and when the Braves are featured on Fox Saturday games that begin before 7 p.m.

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JUNE 2005
TIM HUDSON



JULY 2005
KYLE DAVIES



AUGUST 2005
JOHNSON & LANGERHANS



SEPTEMBER 2005
JEFF FRANCOEUR



OCTOBER 2005
ANDREW JONES



NOVEMBER 2005
BRIAN MCCANN



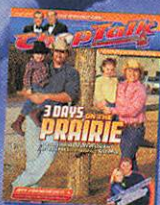
DECEMBER 2005
ANDREW JONES



JANUARY 2006
EDGAR RENTERIA



FEBRUARY 2006
NIEKO, AARON, LEMASTER



MARCH 2006
L'ROCHE FAMILY



APRIL 2006
ANDREW SMOLTZ, CHIPPER



MAY 2006
CHRIS REITSMAN



JUNE 2006
FRANCOEUR'S SLAM



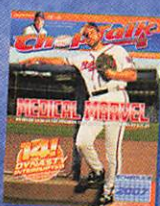
JULY 2006
EDGAR RENTERIA



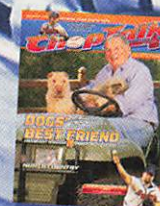
AUGUST 2006
BRIAN MCCANN



SEPTEMBER 2006
BOB WICKMAN



OCTOBER 2006
JOHN SMOLTZ



NOVEMBER 2006
BOBBY COX



DECEMBER 2006
JEFF FRANCOEUR



JANUARY 2007
RAFAEL SORIANO



FEBRUARY 2007
SPRING TRAINING



MARCH 2007
MIKE GONZALEZ



APRIL 2007
ANDREW JONES



MAY 2007
HUBBARD AND JOHNSON



JUNE 2007
JOHN SMOLTZ



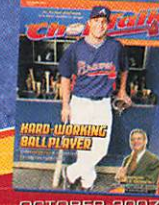
JULY 2007
DIAZ AND HARRIS



AUGUST 2007
RENTERIA



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KEY DATES

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TURNER FIELD OPEN FOR WORKOUTS

FEB. 14

PITCHERS & CATCHERS REPORT TO DISNEY

FEB. 15

FIRST WORKOUT, PITCHERS & CATCHERS

FEB. 19

ALL OTHER PLAYERS REPORT

FEB. 20

FIRST FULL SQUAD WORKOUT

FEB. 27

FIRST EXHIBITION GAME
(UNIV. OF GEORGIA @ DISNEY)

FEB. 28

GRAPEFRUIT LEAGUE OPENER
(DODGERS @ VERO BEACH)

*SEE PAGE 50 FOR SCHEDULE & TICKET INFO.

SPRING IS IN THE AIR

TRAINING CAMP SET TO CONVEENE WITH A NEW FACE IN CENTER AND A FAMILIAR ONE ON THE MOUND

BY GARY CARUSO

TWO STRAIGHT SEASONS of finishing in third place is two seasons too many for a franchise with the pride and tradition of the Braves. New general manager Frank Wren's first roster will begin heading down the long road toward what it hopes will be a return to the top of the National League East when spring training opens this month.

Will Mark Kotsay be an adequate replacement for Andruw Jones in center field? Who will round out the starting rotation behind John Smoltz, Tim Hudson and Tom Glavine? Who will hit in the leadoff spot? Does Javy Lopez have enough left at age 37 to win the backup catcher job?

These are just some of the questions Bobby Cox will try to find the answers to as he prepares the Braves for the season opener Mar. 30 at 8:05 p.m. (ESPN) in Washington's new Nationals Park, followed the next day with the Turner Field opener against Pittsburgh (time, TV have not been announced).

Cox will have a big personal question hanging over him, too. Will this be his last spring training as manager?

The fourth-winningest manager in history, who turns 67 on May 21, told a reporter last spring that 2008 might be his finale. However, he later said he hadn't made a decision and might manage "10 more years."

Cox's celebrated relationship with John Schuerholz took a fork in the road in October when the long-time general manager was promoted to president and Wren took over as GM.

The biggest question facing the team is how well they can get along without Jones, a 10-time Gold Glove winner who departed via free agency, signing a two-year contract with the Dodgers.

For a while, it appeared that Cox would have to choose from three rookies to play the position. However, Wren changed that by picking up the 30-year-old Kotsay in January. The 10-year veteran and former No. 1 draft pick (1996 by Florida, ninth player overall) must prove he's healthy and capable of remaining so for the season.

A .282 career hitter, Kotsay (bats and throws left) appeared in only 56 games last year due to a bad back. He hit .214 with one home run and 20 RBIs after surgery last spring to repair a herniated disk.

If he's healthy, he's a fine defensive centerfielder who can hit for average and deliver lots of doubles, occasional home runs, and run production. He was a .284 hitter before last season, reaching a career high of .314 in 2004 with the A's. He averaged over 11 home runs and 60 RBIs in nine seasons from 1998-2006 with Florida, San Diego and Oakland.

If Kotsay's not quite ready to play every day, the Braves will need to choose among rookies Josh Anderson, Jordan Schafer and Gregor Blanco to fill in behind him.

Schafer is only 21 and hasn't played above Class A (.312/15/63 in 136 games at Rome and Myrtle Beach). Blanco, 24, led the International League in runs scored at Richmond (.282/3/35 in

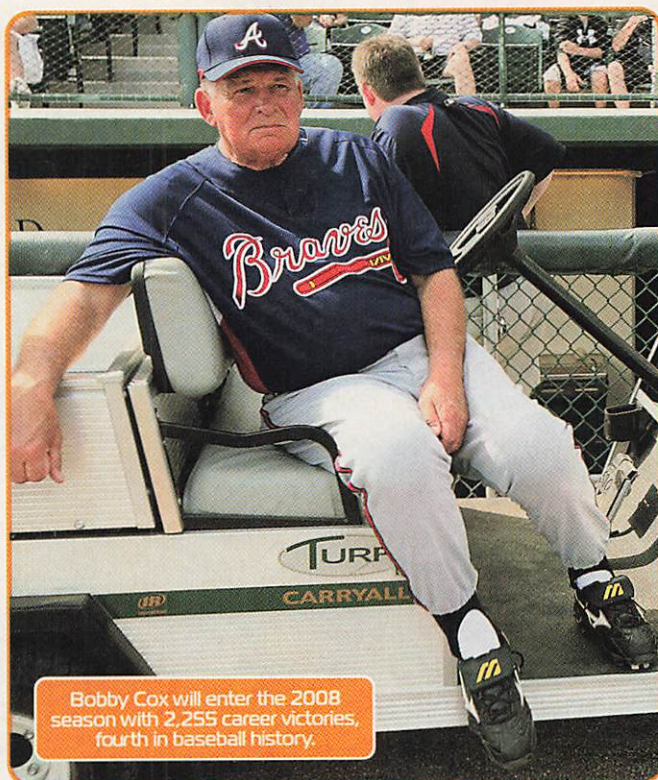
124 games) and continued to show encouraging signs of development in the Venezuelan Winter League, where he hit .345 (second in the league) with 4 homers and 18 RBIs in 62 games. Schafer, regarded as an exceptional fielder as well as probably the hottest player in the farm system, is coming off a strong showing (.324/1/16 in 26 games) in the competitive Arizona Fall League.

The Braves' biggest off-season acquisition was the free agent signing of Glavine, who spent the last five seasons with the Mets. He won 13 games last year, joining the ultra-elite 300-victory club in the process, and worked 200 1/3 innings. He turns 42 in March, but the Braves feel that if he can reach that 200-innings level, he'll stabilize the rotation that has sorely been lacking in depth the last two years.

Chuck James (11-10, 4.24 last year) is the frontrunner for the fourth slot in the rotation, but he could find himself challenged by several candidates lined up for the fifth slot. Among them are righthanders Jeff Bennett (2-1, 3.46) and Jair Jurrjens (acquired from Detroit where he was 3-1, 4.70) and lefty Jo-Jo Reyes (2-2, 6.22), not to mention Mike Hampton, who is continuing to try to battle back from numerous physical setbacks and two full years without pitching. Buddy Carlyle (8-7, 5.21) returns, too, and Blaine Boyer could forge his way into the picture with a strong spring.

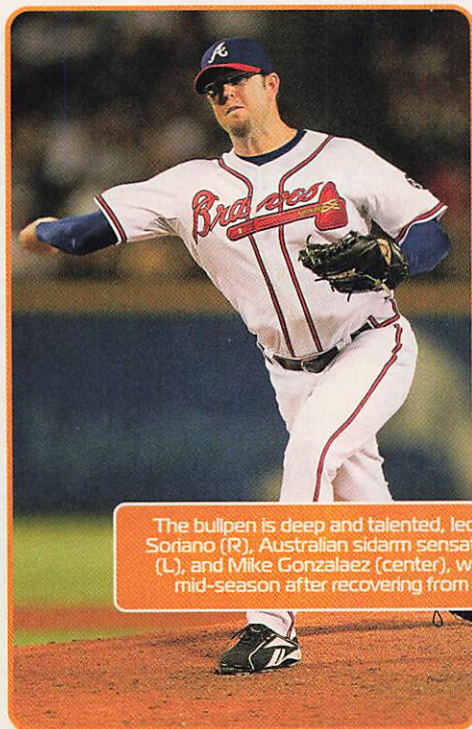
The infield corners are locked up with two of the best switch-hitting power hitters in history - Mark Teixeira at first base and Chipper Jones at third. Kelly Johnson is the incumbent at second base but could be pushed by Martin Prado. And the shortstop job was handed to Yunel Escobar, who hit .326 last year as a rookie, enabling the Braves to trade Edgar Renteria to Detroit for Jurrjens and highly regarded minor league outfielder Gorkys Hernandez.

Jeff Francoeur has a lock on right field, and Brian McCann is set at catcher. Matt Diaz is in left field, though it remains to be seen if Cox will play him every day or perhaps platoon him with rookie Brandon Jones.

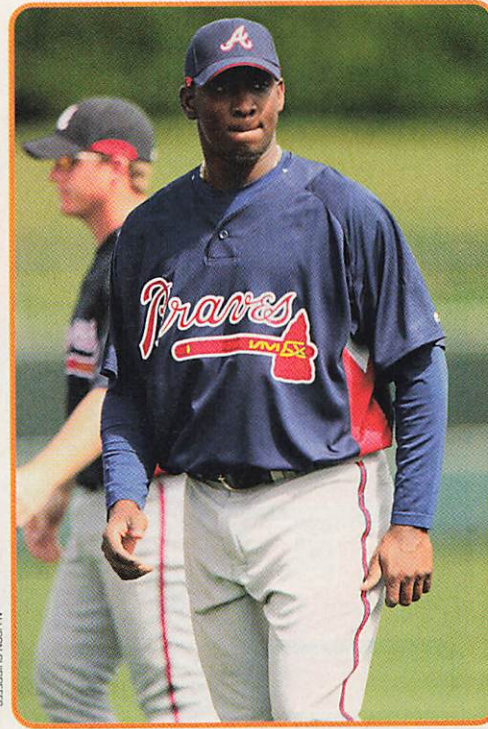
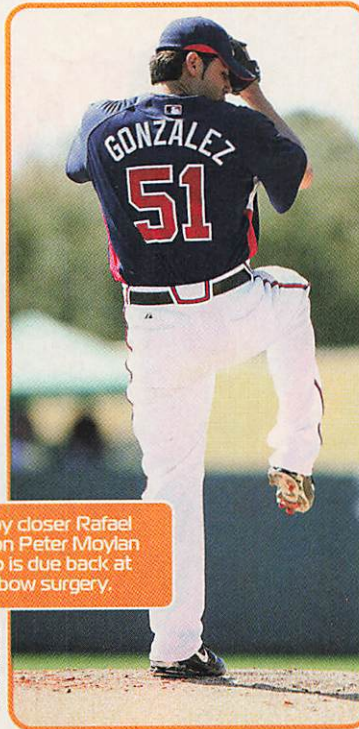


Bobby Cox will enter the 2008 season with 2,255 career victories, fourth in baseball history.

This will be the Braves' 11th season training at Disney's Wide World of Sports outside Orlando, Fla., in Lake Buena Vista. Take I-4 to Hwy 192 West and follow signs to Magic Kingdom/Wide World of Sports, right onto Victory Way. There's no signage to the ballpark that's recently been renamed Champion Stadium. Follow the signs to Wide World of Sports.



The bullpen is deep and talented, led by closer Rafael Soriano (R), Australian sidam sensation Peter Moylan (L), and Mike Gonzalez (center), who is due back at mid-season after recovering from elbow surgery.



JEFF FRANCONIER





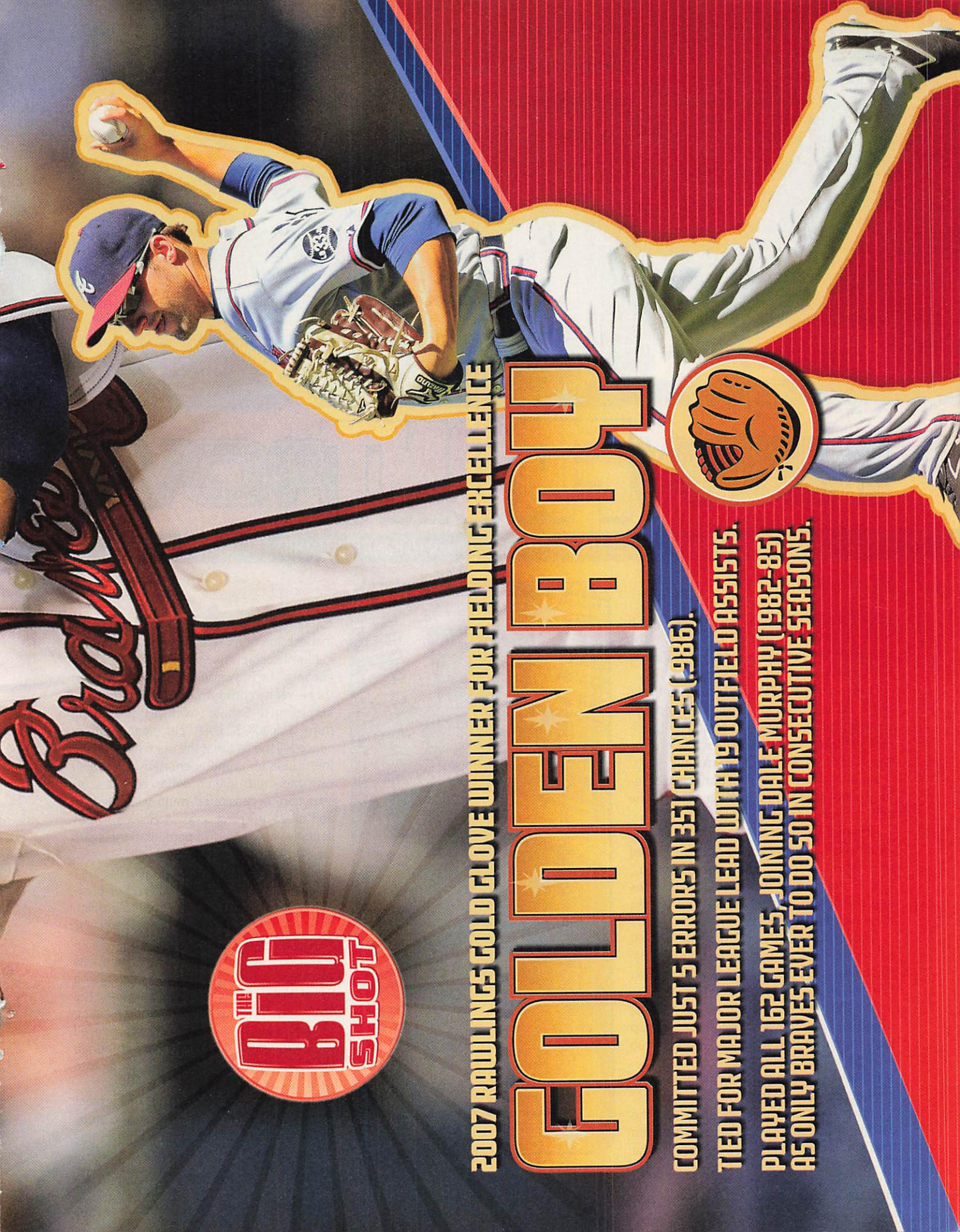
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CARLOS RESTREPO

NEW FRONT ROW

EXCLUSIVE CLUB PUTS SELECT GROUP OF FANS CLOSER TO HOME PLATE THAN THE PITCHER IS

BY BRIAN KNAPP

UNPRECEDENTED exclusivity will greet a select group of fans when the Braves open the home season at Turner Field Mar. 31 against Pittsburgh.

Under construction since last fall, the SunTrust Club will accommodate approximately 150 tomahawk-chopping enthusiasts with first-class amenities few professional sports franchises can match.

Atlanta-based Sun Trust Banks successfully negotiated for the naming rights to the new section in December.

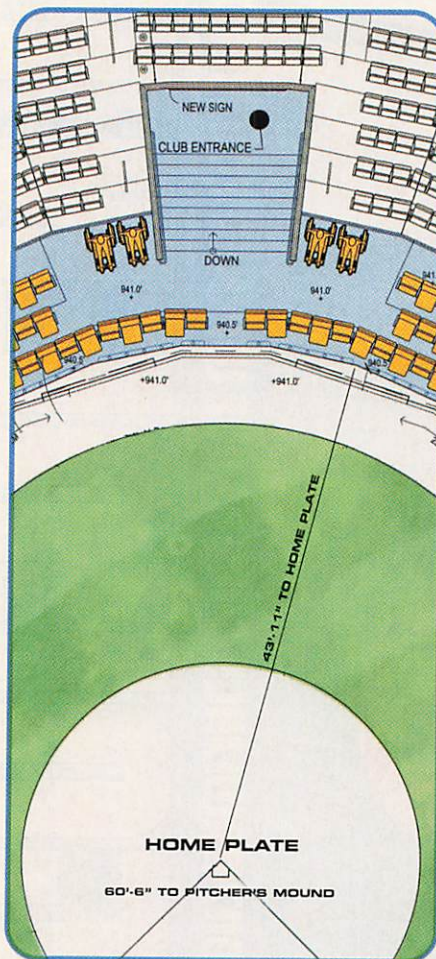
"We're adding a high-end exclusive club for a certain set of fans who have expressed an interest in having that type of option," said Braves senior vice president of sales and marketing Derek Schiller, the driving force behind the project.

A handful of SunTrust Club members will be seated just 43 feet from home plate, close enough to hear a John Smoltz fastball split the air.

"When these fans walk to their seats, they'll feel like they can reach out and tap the umpire on the shoulder," said Braves president John Schuerholz.

No other fans in the major leagues will have access to a closer view of the action.

"You're as close to home plate and the catcher as possible without actually being on the field," Schiller said. "You're closer to the



catcher than even the pitcher is (60 feet, 6 inches). You're more than 15 feet closer."

Membership, however, will not come cheaply. The Braves will require a minimum three-year commitment from buyers, according to Schiller, with prices ranging from \$15,000-\$25,000 per seat. Schiller concedes the fact that the team not wanting the tickets to hit the open market, coupled with the multi-million dollar cost of construction, necessitated multi-year pledges and premium price tags. A Braves representative confirmed 75 percent of the seats have already been sold.

"It's a capital intensive project for us," Schiller said. "We need that kind of commitment to support the cost of the project. The demand for these tickets will far exceed the supply."

A 5,000- to 7,000-square-foot hole was carved out of the Georgia red clay behind home plate in order to clear space for the three rows of luxury seating and adjoining members-only lounge. Workers poured concrete for the 4,000-square-foot lounge the first weekend in January, according to Schiller.

Three years in the making, the project became a reality only after extensive studies of similar clubs throughout Major League Baseball were conducted.



"A lot of the new stadiums included the same kind of option," Schiller said.

He made personal stops at Busch Stadium in St. Louis, Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles, and Safeco Field in Seattle, all of which have been outfitted with comparable clubs. The Great American Ball Park in Cincinnati and Coors Field in Denver also served as models, as did Citizens Bank Park in Philadelphia, which offers such amenities to 600 fans.

The Braves weighed all options before they put their plan in motion.

"We looked around the league and sort of collected ideas," Schiller said. "We gathered ideas, picked up the best practices, and applied it to the size of our club."

SunTrust Club members will have access to valet parking on the backside of Turner Field, near the media parking lot, and will be allowed to enter the complex from a separate entrance. Food and beverages – executive chef preparations and traditional ballpark fare will be offered – are included in the price of the ticket package.

Cushioned seats will enhance the viewing experience, and members will be able to place orders from where they sit. In addition, flat-panel television monitors are being installed on the wall in front of the first row of seats, giving fans immediate access to replays. The lounge will feature a bar and luxury seating, and its close proximity to the Braves clubhouse will make interaction with players a definite possibility.

Existing season ticket holders will not be affected by the addition of the SunTrust Club, as no premium seats were lost to the project.

"That's part of the reason we added three rows of seating," Schiller said.

Instead, the club serves as the latest modification – the team spent \$71 million on its 71-foot-tall, state-of-the-art scoreboard in 2005 – to Turner Field, which opened 11 years ago in wake of the 1996 Summer Olympics.

Schiller affirmed the Braves would reserve the right to revisit pricing on SunTrust Club membership, as they do with all other seats. The team requested and received advance approval of the project from Major League Baseball. And while a considerable amount of foul territory will be lost – a fact that could rob pitchers of precious outs – no red flags were raised.

"Major League Baseball reviewed our setup and had to approve it," Schiller said. "Their people do not believe our club is going to have any impact on our games."

'06 WORLD CHAMP CARDS SCATTERED TO-AND-FRO

THE SCOTT ROLEN-FOR-TROY GLAUS TRADE was necessary for both clubs. The Cardinals needed to separate their warring factions, Rolen and manager **Tony La Russa**, and the Blue Jays' motivation – while less well-known – was just as strong. Glaus' recurring foot problems are exacerbated by playing on artificial turf, and his availability might have been limited if he remained with the Blue Jays.

It will be interesting to see how the Cardinals fare without three cornerstones from their 2006 championship team – **Scott Rolen**, shortstop and Series MVP **David Eckstein** (signed by Toronto) and centerfielder **Jim Edmonds** (signed by San Diego). **Matt Clement**, who did not pitch last season while recovering from shoulder surgery, is the only addition to the embattled rotation. The team's goal will be to stay in contention early in the season, then get hot if **Mark Mulder** returns in May and **Chris Carpenter** at the All-Star break.

The addition of free-agent centerfielder **Mike Cameron** not only upgrades the Brewers defensively, with **Bill Hall** moving from center field to third base and **Ryan Braun** shifting from third to left field, but also improves the team's baserunning. Cameron was the best baserunner at going from first to third on a single last season, making it on 15 of 23 tries, according to the **Bill James Handbook**. The Brewers could have four players finish with 20 homers and 20 stolen bases – Cameron, Braun, **Rickie Weeks** and **Corey Hart**.

The Cubs professed to be unconcerned by centerfielder **Felix Pie**'s low batting average (.244 in 127 at-bats) in the Dominican Winter League. Pie's struggles were to be expected, team officials said, as he overhauled his approach.

Third baseman **Pedro Feliz** was slow to attract interest as a free agent despite averaging 21 homers the past four seasons while playing his home games at San Francisco's pitcher-friendly SBC Park. Feliz also is above-average defensively. Teams were turned off by his .288 career on-base percentage.

The Rockies signed former Brave **Marcus Giles** to a minor-league contract, but seem committed to **Jayson Nix** at second base. Nix, the younger brother of outfielder **Layne Nix** (Milwaukee), was the Most Outstanding Player of the World Cup tournament in November, helping Team USA win the gold medal for the first time since 1974. After the tournament, Team USA manager and former Braves second baseman **Dave Johnson** told Rockies manager **Clint Hurdle** that the Rockies would be foolish not to give Nix a chance.

The Reds were unwilling to move their top position prospect, Triple-A outfielder **Jay Bruce**, in a trade for either righthander **Dan Haren** or lefty **Erik Bedard**. Some scouts compare Bruce to a young **Larry Walker**, and the Reds consider him too valuable to move with **Adam Dunn** and **Ken Griffey Jr.** entering the final years of their contracts.

— KEN ROSENTHAL IS A SENIOR WRITER FOR FOXSPORTS.COM

Forgive Josh Anderson if he wasn't too excited to hear that the Braves acquired Mark Kotsay from Oakland in mid-January to play center field.

The 25-year-old Anderson, who became a Brave Nov. 16 in a trade with Houston that sent reliever Oscar Villarreal to the Astros, had designs on that job himself. For that matter, he still does, but Kotsay replaced him as the frontrunner to take over Andruw Jones' old job.

Regardless of where Anderson fits into the Braves plans this spring, he brings a valuable commodity that there's been little of on the Atlanta roster: That's speed and basestealing ability. Though the 6-2, 195-pound native of Eubank, Ky., is lacking in power, he's capable of being an important weapon in his own way.

"The last thing I'm going to try to do is replace Andruw," Anderson said. "I can't be Andruw.

He's a phenomenal player. I'm going to try and be Josh and just play my game and play hard. I guarantee I'll play hard. So I'm going to go to spring training with the mind-set of just doing the best I can."

Anderson's best, regardless of whether he's a starter or reserve, could improve a Braves' offense that was one of the least mobile in baseball in 2007. Atlanta's 64 stolen bases were fifth-lowest in the majors and third-lowest in the National League. That was with the services of Willie Harris (17) and Edgar Renteria (11), the only Braves with double-digit steals last year, and neither will be with the club this season. That leaves Kelly Johnson, who had nine steals but was caught five times, as the leading returning basestealer.

Anderson could change that. He's been a base-stealing threat everywhere he's played.

After starring at Pulaski County High School, where he hit .522 with 34 steals as a senior, he began burning up the basepaths in college at Eastern Kentucky, where he led the nation with 57 steals as a junior in 2003 when he was Ohio Valley Conference Player of the Year. He still holds OVC single-season and career-records for steals, as well as the single-season record for hits.

After being taken by Houston in the fourth round of the 2003 draft, Anderson went to the New York-Penn League, where he stole 26 bases for Tri-City (Short-Season A), the second-best total in the NYPL.

The next year, he led all of minor league baseball with a combined 78 steals while splitting time with the South Atlantic League's Lexington Legends (A), where he stole 47 bases in 56 attempts (third-best in the SAL) while hitting .326, and the Salem Avalanche of the Carolina League (A), where he was 31-for-35 in steals and had a team-high six triples.

In 2005 and 2006, with Corpus Christi (AA), he led the Texas League with 50 and 43 steals (in '06 he also led the league with

173 hits) before going 40-for-48 with the Round Rock Express (Triple-A) of the Pacific Coast League last year.

"My legs are what got me to the big leagues, and I take pride in the fact that that's my game," said Anderson. "I've got to use my legs any way I can, and that's to get on base for guys like Chipper [Jones] and [Brian] McCann and [Jeff] Francoeur. That's going to be my job if I'm given the opportunity. So I'll use my legs to steal bases, get in scoring position, do whatever I have to do to help the team."

If his initial September callup to Houston last season is any indication, he's ready to help the Braves right away. He shook off an 0-for-3 skid as a pinch-hitter in his first six games to turn it on offensively when he got the chance to start, and he never stopped. He recorded multi-hit games in his first four starts, including a five-for-five performance against Pittsburgh on Sept. 16, and hit in 14 of his 15 starts overall. He finished with a .358 batting average and a .413 on-base percentage.

"When I got called up, I remember all of the guys were telling me to just relax and feel like you belong here," he recalled. "It's being star-struck and feeling like you don't belong, but I went in there with the attitude that it was just another game. Getting back-to-back at-bats night after night, just to play consistently, helped a lot, too."

Though only a rookie, speedy Josh Anderson could add excitement to the Braves' attack whether he's playing center field or pinch-hitting or pinch-running.

"So I feel like I'm capable of doing what I did in September," he continued. "I know that you're not going to have a hit streak going the whole season, and I realize you're not always going to hit .350. I've been around baseball and know that it's not always that way. But I feel like I'm capable of doing what I showed in September, and I'm excited about this coming year."

A left-handed hitter (throws right), he showed a penchant for going the opposite way - one of his biggest hits was a seventh-inning single to left field on Sept. 27 that broke up Cincinnati pitcher Matt Belisle's bid for a perfect game - and for keeping the ball on the ground, two key ingredients for a successful speed hitter.

Defensively, Anderson played all three outfield spots for the Astros, but primarily center field, committing one error in 32 chances. He was a .972 fielder in the minor leagues (.980 in center).

But Houston's acquisition of Michael Bourn, another speedy outfielder, from the Philadelphia Phillies on Nov. 7 made Anderson expendable, and Braves GM Frank Wren jumped on the opportunity to acquire him.

"Josh Anderson is one of the fastest players in baseball and can really play center field," said Wren. "He gives us a guy that has a little more experience than the young players that we



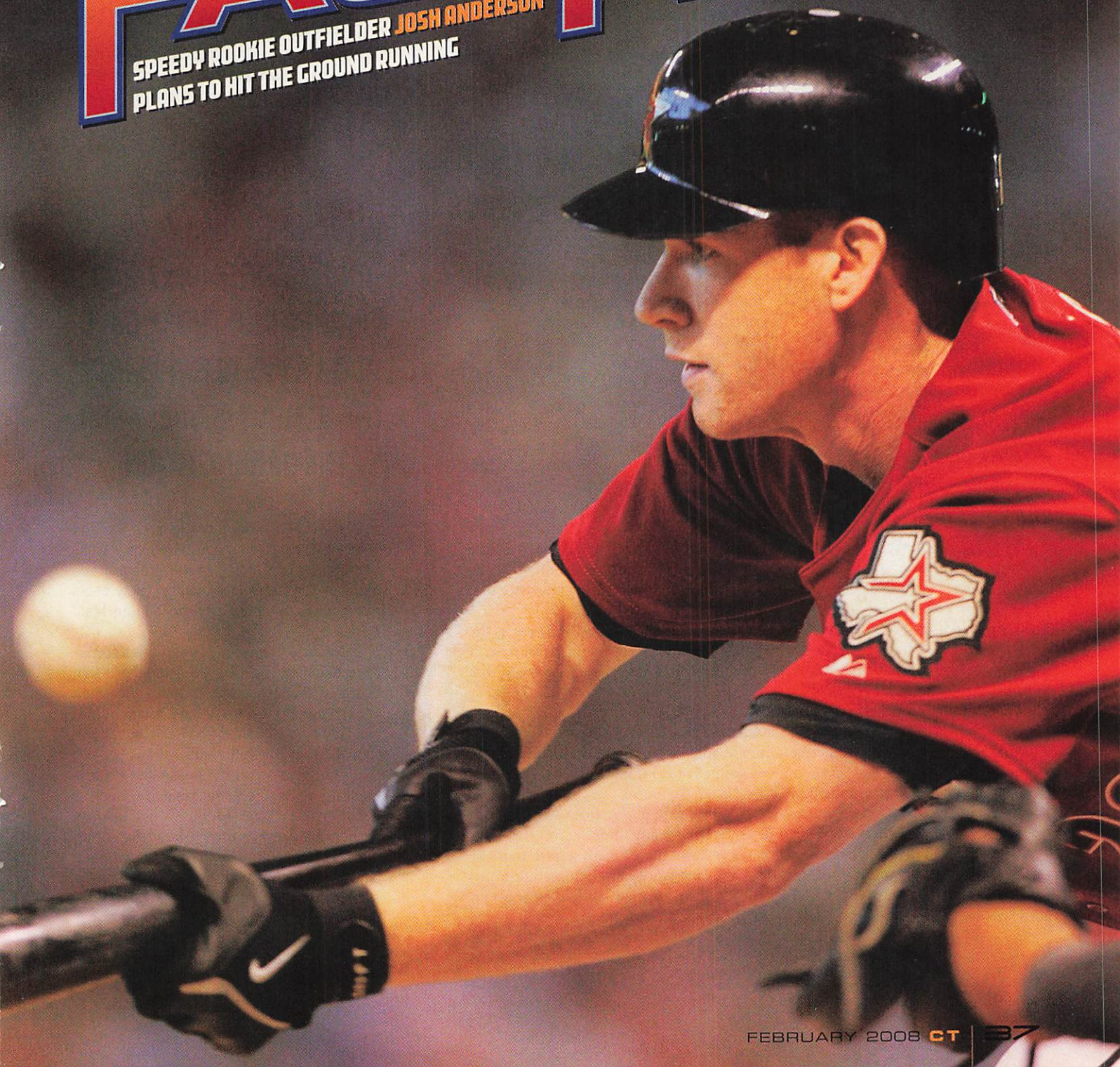
HOUSTON ASTROS

HOUSTON ASTROS

CONTINUED ON PAGE 38

FAST FEET

SPEEDY ROOKIE OUTFIELDER **JOSH ANDERSON**
PLANS TO HIT THE GROUND RUNNING



IT'S A PRIVILEGE TO GO TO SUCH A FRANCHISE

TO BE HONEST, I was very thrilled about the trade to Atlanta. My wife and I have heard nothing but good things about the organization and the city.

It will be kind of different - I spent 10 years in one organization (Cubs) - but to be able to have the privilege of going to such a good place is really exciting.

I'm obviously very pleased to play for Bobby Cox. Coming to the Braves, you get this feeling of being in "pitcher heaven." You don't read about the Braves acquiring people that they don't really need or want, and everything I've heard about Bobby is that he gives you every opportunity to excel and is really a master with how he handles his bullpen. So that part of the equation is very exciting.

It's a quality group of guys. Unfortunately, I don't think I've met any of the guys on the team, but from people that have played for Bobby, I've heard nothing but good things.

I also like pitching at Turner Field. It seems to be a place where I've enjoyed some success, so I'm excited about that.

I read stuff on the difference in my ERA at and away from Wrigley Field and the splits, obviously, that I didn't like, and that I didn't fare well at Wrigley Field, considering I had to play 81 games there every year. But I think that was partially due to a couple of bad games that I had every year.

I'd have two or three bad games where I'd give up some big runs at home, and

I think that's not necessary an anomaly as much as a product of inflated bad outings.

But to get a fresh start and to know that I'm starting with a clean slate is a very nice thing to come into. Obviously, you earn your opportunities, so what I do on the field is going to dramatically affect the future opportunities.

“ WHEN YOU GET AN OPPORTUNITY WITH A NEW TEAM, THERE'S REALLY A PUSH TO MAKE A GREAT FIRST IMPRESSION. ”

The bullpen should have a pretty good 1-2 punch from the left side when Mike Gonzalez comes back. I've seen Mike pitch, predominantly in Pittsburgh, when he was their closer, and I was very impressed with what he could do.

It's always nice with a lefty to know that you have a 1-2 punch, to be able to have a great manager like Bobby and know that he's going to be able to match up possibly earlier in the game, really shorten the game like that, and hand the ball to the closer. It's a great thing to sit in the bullpen and have confidence that the job is going to get done.

I would hope I can be a leader by example, but I don't know if "leader" is the correct term. I have been around a little bit and I've seen some things, so if there is something that I know that I can impart to a teammate, obviously, that comes with the territory.

You want to do everything you can to help the guy next to you succeed, because in this game, although individual stats are fine and good, what happens with the team has to be the ultimate goal. So anything that I can do, big or small, to help the guy next to me is going to be, I don't think as much of a privilege as it is a requirement.

The countdown to spring training is very exciting. I've been working out five days a week with my trainer, and I'm getting ready to go.

When you get an opportunity with a new team, there's really a push to make a great first impression. That's not to say I didn't work hard before, but in this particular setting, there's an added urgency and a new anticipation about everything. So I'm getting ready to go. It is right around the corner.

It will be a little different, because I'll be in Florida this year (rather than Arizona where the Cubs train).

already have - [Gregor] Blanco, Jordan Schafer - and may give us a bridge until they're ready to play."

Anderson is technically a rookie, like Schafer and Blanco, and he's eager to play in Atlanta for the team he grew up watching.

"I just loved watching [Tom] Glavine and [John] Smoltz and Chipper and those guys play," he said. "I've always had the utmost respect for the organization. I really have a respect for the guys and the way they play the game and the way they carry themselves, not only on the field but off the field, too. I just see a lot of good character there. The Braves organization is an organization that everybody in baseball respects, and I'm just tickled to get the opportunity to be with them."

“ I JUST LOVED WATCHING [TOM] GLAVINE AND [JOHN] SMOLTZ AND CHIPPER AND THOSE GUYS PLAY... I'VE ALWAYS HAD THE UTMOST RESPECT FOR THE ORGANIZATION. ”

Like any Kentucky thoroughbred (he and wife, Heather, reside in Eubank), he's looking forward to running in the green, green grass of Turner Field, which certainly beats the wacky center-field hill in Minute Maid Park.

"I don't think anybody would miss something like that," he said with a laugh. "It's an obstacle that you can't prepare for when you're running toward it. It's a tough obstacle. I did enjoy Minute Maid Park, but I don't think I'll miss the hill at all.

"I'm excited about the possibility of playing in Turner Field because it's such a beautiful park," he added. "I get to pass Turner Field every time I head to spring training. We're on I-75 there, and we head past the stadium and it's such a beautiful stadium. My aunt is a season-ticket holder there, so she's really excited about it."

Hopefully, many more Braves fans will get excited about Anderson, too, once they see what he can do.

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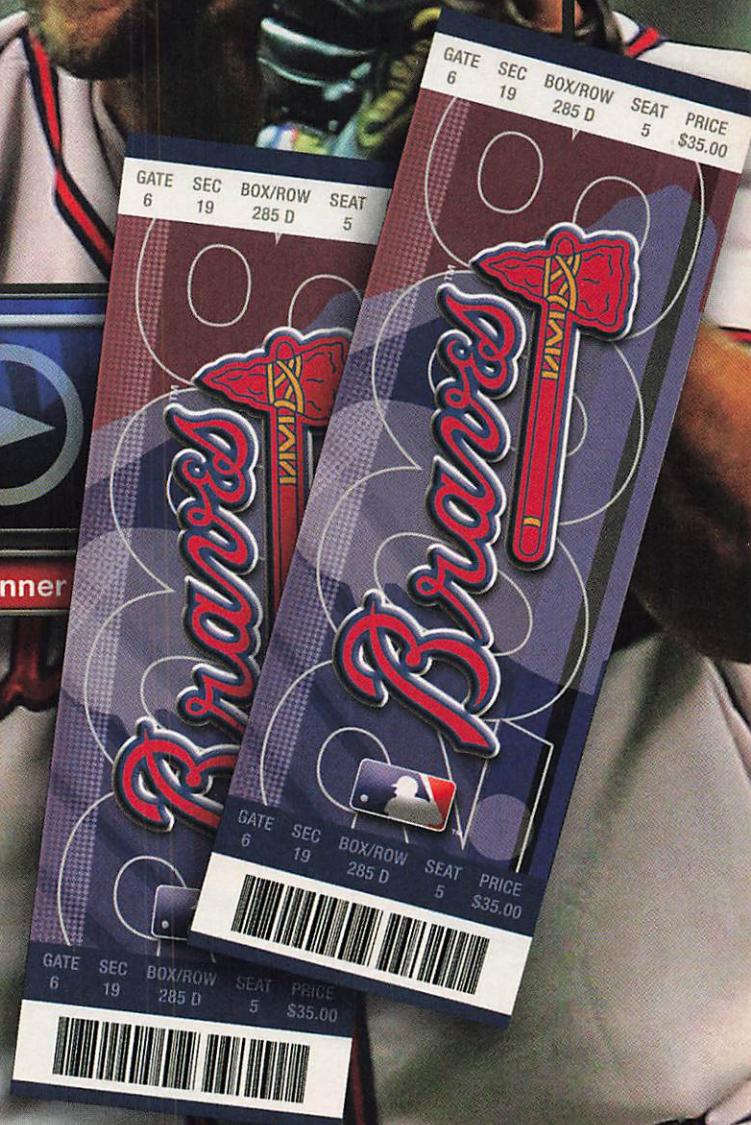


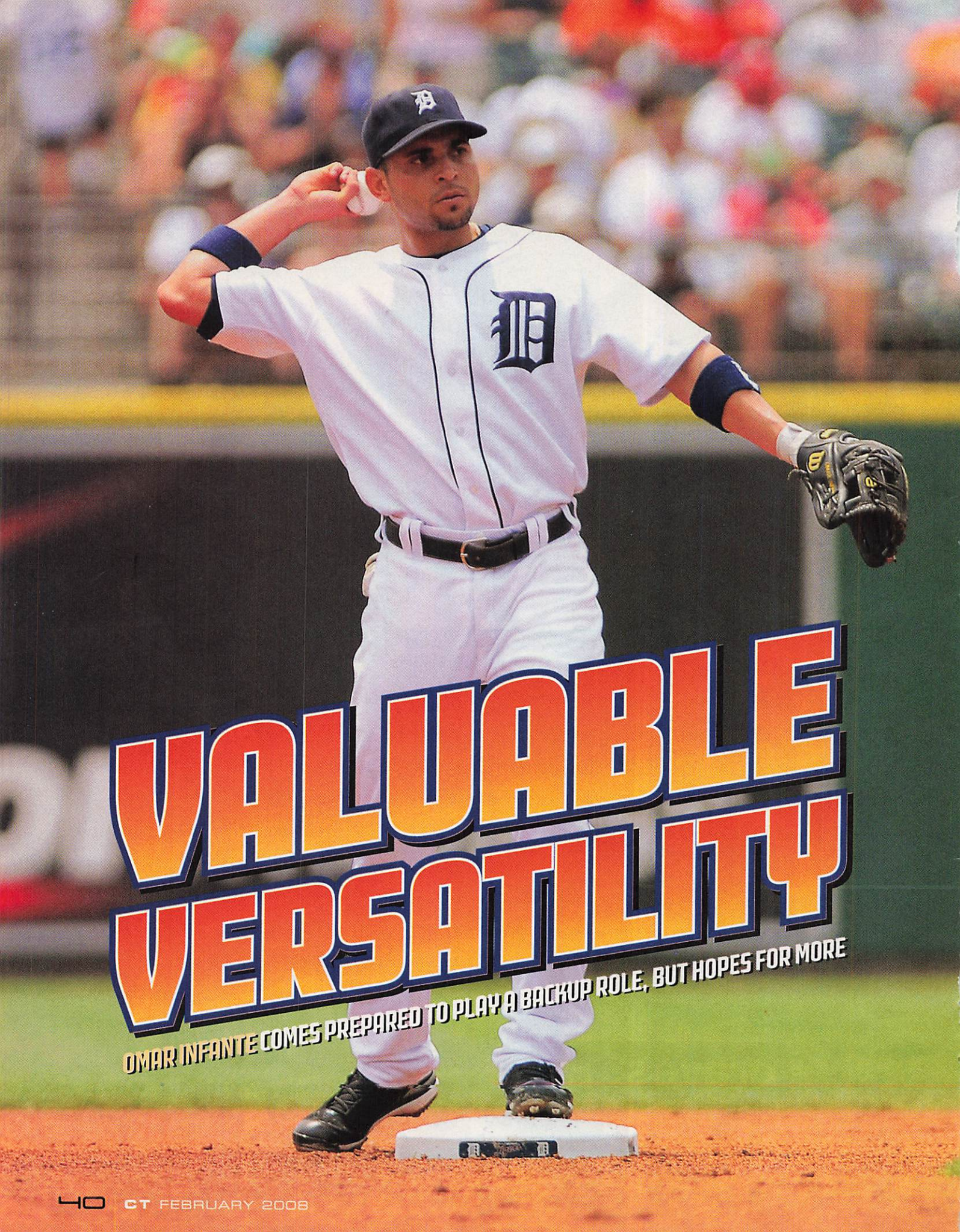
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A photograph of baseball player Omar Infante in a Detroit Tigers uniform. He is wearing a white jersey with a blue 'D' logo, white pants, and a blue cap. He is in a ready position on a baseball field, with his right hand near his head and his left hand in a black baseball glove. The background is a blurred crowd of spectators.

VALUABLE VERSATILITY

OMAR INFANTE COMES PREPARED TO PLAY A BACKUP ROLE, BUT HOPES FOR MORE

OMAR INFANTE sees the handwriting on the wall, but he's not ready to accept it.

The Braves' newest utility player, Infante was acquired by trade from the Cubs to serve as a backup shortstop to Yunel Escobar and to fill in at second base, third base and even the outfield, if needed. He can play all those positions and play them well. On top of that, he's only 26 years old and has shown he can hit when given the chance to play regularly.

No wonder he longs to hear opportunity knocking at his door, especially after being traded twice in three weeks this off-season.

"I wanted out of Detroit," said Infante, with a slight trace of frustration. "They couldn't give me the at-bats I wanted. They had day-to-day people there."

On Nov. 12, he got his wish and was traded to the Cubs for outfielder Jacque Jones. Then on Dec. 4, the Cubs packaged him with reliever Will Ohman and sent him to the Braves for reliever Jose Ascanio.

A career American Leaguer to this point, Infante is thrilled to be in the National League where bench players get more playing time.

"There are many changes, it's easier to get playing time," said Infante. "I am very happy to be in the National League because of the opportunities."

To make up for a season of relative inactivity with Detroit, where he hit a very respectable .271 but got just 166 at-bats, Infante played winter ball in his native Venezuela, and again proved he has a productive bat, as well as a solid glove.

Infante hit .291 for the Anzoategui Caribes with 7 home runs, 11 doubles and 34 RBI in 235 at-bats. He was named the league's player of the week Dec. 17 for hitting .529 over the previous seven days.

"I came to Venezuela to play and to get the at-bats I needed," said Infante. "I like playing here. I am not a regular player (in the majors). I have to continue progressing in my career, continue playing. I am 26 years old - I have to play."

It's no wonder Infante still thinks he can be a regular. In 2004, when he was only 22, he got his one and only chance to play every day and hit .264 with 16 home runs, 9 triples, 27 doubles and 55 RBIs in 142 games (503 at-bats), mostly at second base.

"Opportunities always present themselves," said Infante about the coming season. "I don't consider myself a backup. I can play every day."

Signed as an amateur free agent by Detroit in 1999, Infante has a career batting average of .253 with 32 home runs and 154 RBIs in 494 games. He sees himself as a quality player who is passing through the utility player role for now.

"My expectations are to play hard, to have the opportunity to

show who I am," said Infante about coming to the Braves.

Who is this new "super utilityman," as general manager Frank Wren called him?

Infante's rise through professional baseball has faced its share of obstacles. He almost didn't become a baseball player. Infante, who grew up low middle class, lost a brother to a robbery in 1999 and his father in 2003 to kidney cancer. Grief-stricken, his mother didn't want her baseball prospect son so far away from home.

"My mom said, 'Don't continue playing,'" said Infante.

But the young prospect felt he'd do more good by sticking with baseball.

"I continued playing to help the family," he said. "I bought my mother an apartment, little by little, so she would be okay."

Infante proudly talks about his father being a star in local amateur ball. His parents immersed their children in baseball, taking them to games as children. Little Omar was playing organized baseball at 4 years old.

Infante's father worked in the port at Guanta, on Venezuela's Caribbean coast, and his mother worked as a nurse. At 15, Infante started readying himself for a shot at the big leagues, yet thinking it would never happen.

"At 15 years old, I started to learn what it took to sign professionally," he said. "At that age, young men start to mature. We didn't think we would sign."

Jesus Risales, a friend of Infante's father and a trainer, took on Omar. Risales scouted for the Colorado Rockies.

"Let's see if we can get him signed," Risales said about Infante back then.

Infante spent four months in the Rockies academy, but never signed. However, Risales had faith in the young player.

"You have a shot. You've got talent. If not with the Rockies, then with

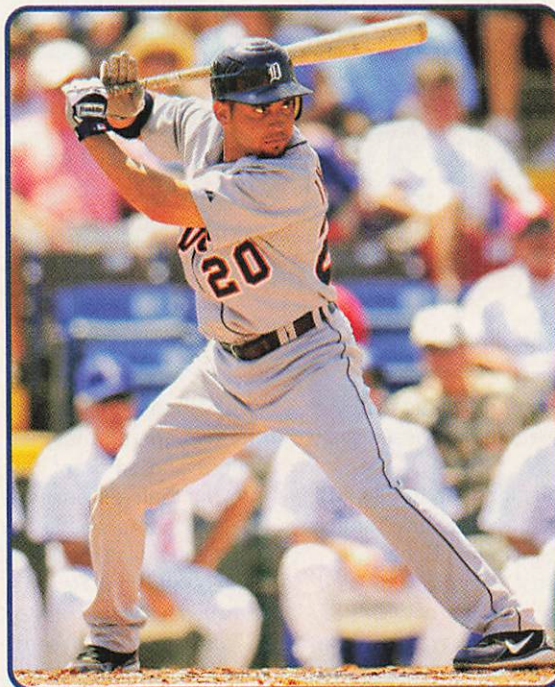
someone else," Risales told Infante.

Yohanna Hernandez, Infante's wife of three years, met him in the Puerto La Cruz apartment he bought his mom, showing what a wise investment can do.

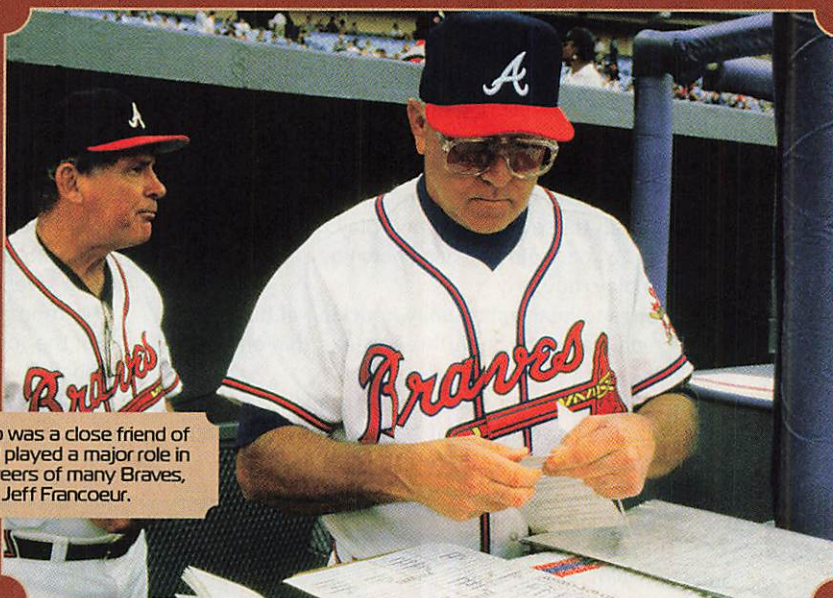
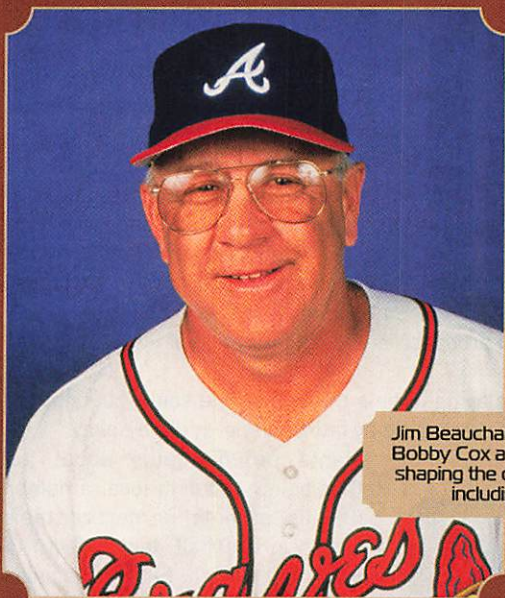
Youthful but mature, Infante recognizes his shortcomings, as well as his abilities. Of his stay in Detroit, he admits, "I didn't bat well enough, not good numbers. It's a business. They gave me the opportunity."

Keen on opportunities and taking advantage of them, Infante sees his new National League club as a potential treasure trove. With the league's fondness for pitching changes and double-switches, he stands to receive the playing time he wants. Infante hopes one of those opportunities leads to something bigger.

"There's always a chance," said Infante on his way to a ballgame in Venezuela. "You work, and the opportunity presents itself. When they decide, I will be ready."



In his only season as a regular, Infante hit .264 with 16 home runs, 9 triples and 27 doubles for Detroit in 2004.



Jim Beauchamp was a close friend of Bobby Cox and played a major role in shaping the careers of many Braves, including Jeff Francoeur.

ATLANTA BRAVES

ATLANTA BRAVES

DEATH IN THE FAMILY

JIM BEAUCHAMP, BENCH COACH OF '95 WORLD CHAMPIONS, LOSES LONG BATTLE

BY MARK BOWMAN OF MLB.COM

THE BRAVES FAMILY lost one of its beloved members on Christmas Day, when Jim Beauchamp passed away at the age of 68.

Before Beauchamp succumbed to his long battle against leukemia, he had the opportunity to share one last conversation with many of his closest baseball friends, including Bobby Cox.

"Beach was one of my very, very closest friends," Cox said. "He'll be sorely missed by a lot of people."

Knowing that his good friend had taken a turn for the worse, Cox rushed to an Atlanta-area hospice to visit Beauchamp shortly before his death. Though weak, the bench coach of the 1995 World Championship team managed to give Cox a strong handshake when their final conversation came to a close.

"He was just one of those really good guys," Cox said. "He did everything the right way. He was one of those no-nonsense guys. He was respected by everybody."

Cox met Beauchamp when they were playing together in the minors nearly 40 years ago. They would manage against each other in the minors, and when it came time for Cox to hire his bench coach in Atlanta before the start of the 1991 season, he called upon the man many in the organization affectionately knew as "Beach."

While serving as Cox's bench coach from 1991-98, Beauchamp helped the Braves win four National League pennants and seven division titles in addition to the '95 Series.

Beauchamp served as one of the Braves' roving minor league instructors from 1999-2006 and would have held that role again last season had he not started getting sick shortly after spring training began. After losing more than 20 pounds in about two weeks, he was diagnosed with leukemia.

Cox called Beauchamp on a regular basis throughout the sea-

son with the knowledge that every conversation could be the last the two shared together. They'd talk about the game the night before and some of Beach's beloved former pupils who were proving themselves at the major league level.

Beauchamp was known for his ability to mold young outfielders. One of his favorites was Jeff Francoeur, who quickly came to understand that Beach's harsh words were just a sign that he believed his young players had the capability of performing better.

"He was tough on some of those guys," Cox said. "But everybody loved to see Beach around. Those players really respected him."

Francoeur, Jeff Blauser, current bench coach Chino Cadahia, long-time Braves coach Bobby Dews and Marlins manager (and former Braves coach) Fredi Gonzalez were among the many members of the baseball world in addition to Cox who rushed to be with Beauchamp during his final days.

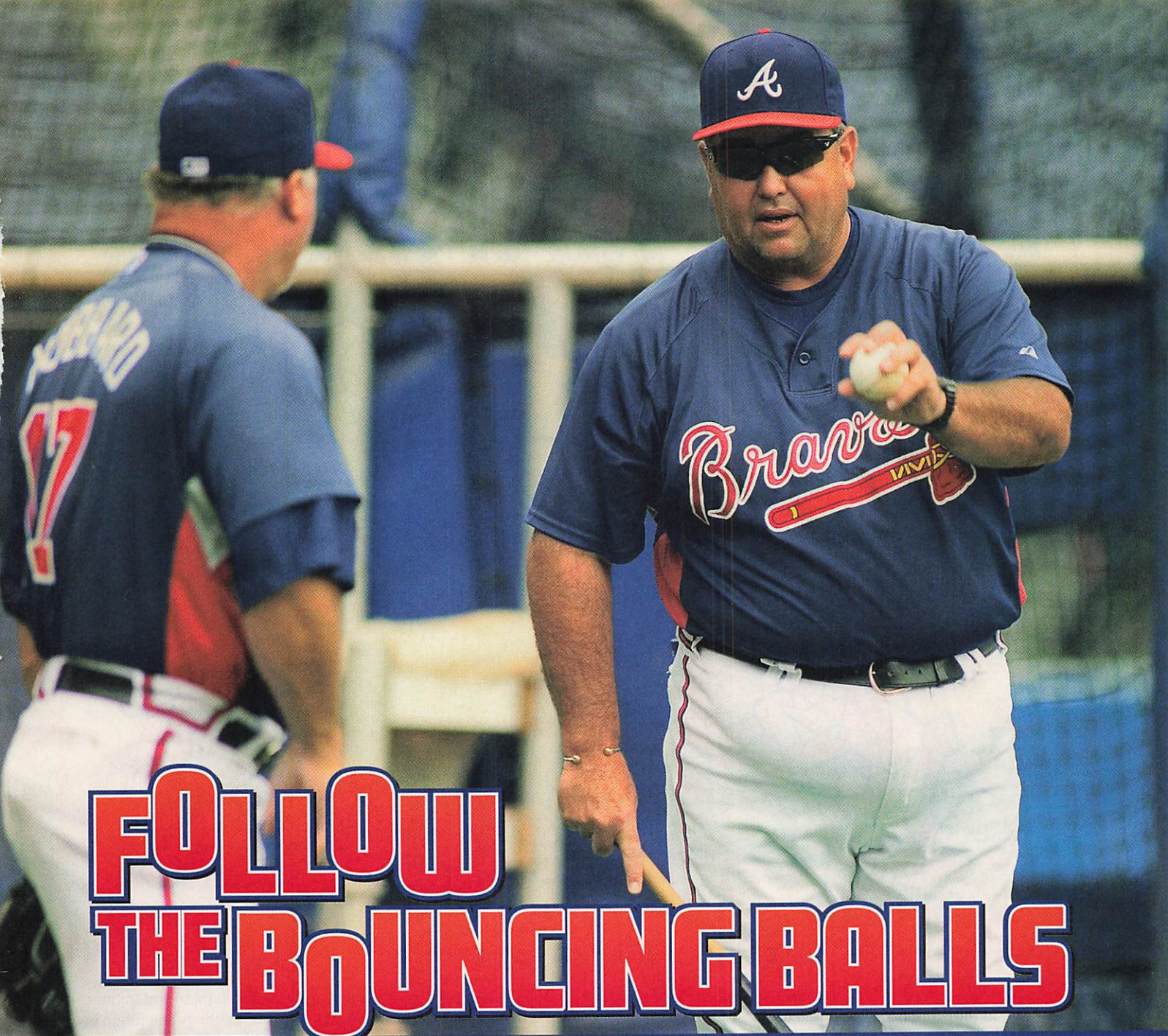
As Cox said goodbye to his friend, he told Beauchamp to continue keeping a watchful eye on the Braves from above.

"I told him to get that [lineup] ready for me when the season starts," Cox said.

During his 10-year major league career as a reserve first baseman/outfielder, Beauchamp was with the Braves (1965, '67), Cardinals, Astros, Mets, Brewers and Cardinals. He posted a .231 career batting average with 14 homers in 393 games.

"Looking back on his life and the response that we've gotten, it's obvious that he got his money's worth," said Beauchamp's son, Kash. "He's going to live on through his influences and teachings... I don't think he knew how much of an influence he had on so many people until the end."

Memorial services were held at Southwest Christian Church in East Point, just south of Atlanta, and at Phenix City, Ala., and Grove, Okla.



FOLLOW THE BOUNCING BALLS

INFIELD PRACTICE IS A WHIRLWIND OF PRE-GAME ACTIVITY THAT KEEPS FIELDERS SHARP

BY JON COOPER

Good eyes, quick reflexes, keen anticipation. It takes all those qualities, and more, to play the infield. Fans also need all of those qualities just to follow infield practice before a Braves game.

Those who show up at Turner Field a couple of hours before a game can play "try to follow the bouncing ball" ... well, balls, actually. They're everywhere, going in all directions, all over the infield, in a model of efficiency and symmetry.

For example, on one September afternoon last season, Paul Runge, the former Braves infielder (1981-88) and current Danville manager who was serving as a late-season "callup

coach", stood on the third-base side of the batting cage, smacking balls to players lined up at the third base position. At the same time, first base coach Glenn Hubbard, lined up to Runge's right, was hitting balls to players at second base.

On the first-base side of the batting cage, third base coach Brian Snitker hit sharp grounders to shortstop, while senior baseball advisor Bobby Dews grounded even more balls to the group of players at first base.

In the outfield, pitching coach Roger McDowell lofted fungos - named for the long, thin, light "fungo" bat used by coaches for such drills - to the outfielders.

FUNGO-MANIA



"FUNGO" SOUNDS LIKE it could be a descendant of the extinct "Dodo" bird, or perhaps a breed of dinosaur, or even some mutation of mold or mildew. In fact, it is only a special type of baseball bat that is an essential component to infield practice.

No one seems to have an explanation for the source of the word "fungo." There are many theories but no documentation of where the term originated.

Simply put, a fungo bat is a slightly longer, lighter and thinner version of a bat than what players use when hitting. The fungo is used by coaches, when tossing the ball in the air and hitting grounders and flyballs in practice. Since it is lighter than a regular bat, it is less tiring to swing it hundreds of times, as coaches must do, and it gives them better accuracy than they would get from a regular bat.

The long, thin fungo bat is the key piece of equipment for infield practice.



Amazingly, all of this goes on simultaneously - at the same time batting practice is in full swing.

Fielding practice is a pretty standard routine, but it can't be taken for granted and requires complete concentration, especially with live batting going on.

"You've got to be heads-up," said second baseman Kelly Johnson, who recalled an instance during last spring training when he paid for having his head down. "Pete Orr hit a line drive in spring training, and it hit me in the neck."

With the constant buzz and flurry of activity, it's hard to believe

anyone can get anything done, which is why the Braves have a block of time on the field dedicated solely to working on their fielding. Call it a pre pre-game warmup.

"We get out there 30 minutes before hitting practice and we go through all the defensive drills," said Dews, who has been with the Braves organization since 1975. "During batting practice, normally a major league team takes their defense, and so many balls are flying around in the field that you can't really concentrate on each play like the doubleplay, bunt plays..."

"We get into every facet of what can happen in the game, and we have a routine we go through. We have fewer injuries from balls flying around, people getting hit with balls. A lot of times those injuries aren't monumental, because they're just minor injuries. But they may keep the player from playing that night, if he gets hit with a batted ball while he's catching a ground ball. It's really been productive for our entire organization."

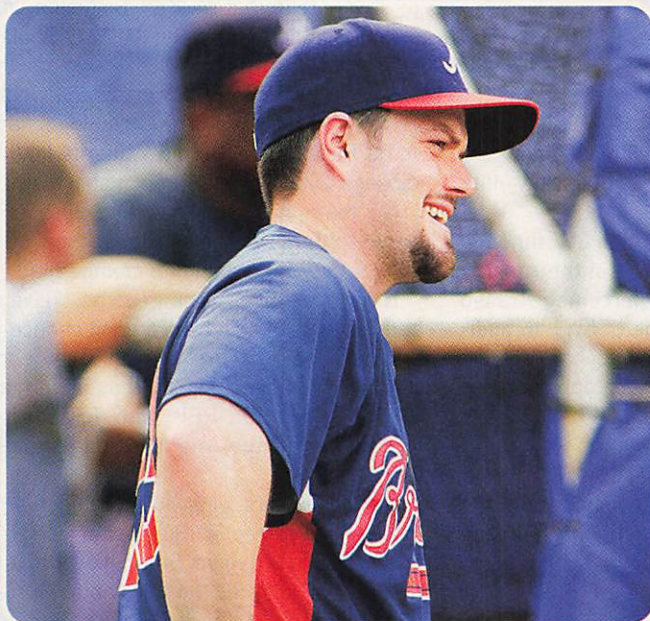
And if circumstances warrant it, the practice can start even earlier.

"If a guy really is struggling, we'll be out there at 3 o'clock for special work, if he's really struggling turning the doubleplay or scoops at first base, maybe going back on the ball in the outfield," Dews said. "As a rule, people don't like to work on a weakness in front of anybody. You want to work on your weaknesses when nobody else is out there but you and the coach. You work on your strengths when the people are out there."

In addition to working on their own positions, some players get the urge to try others, as well. While some casually take throws at first base - a daily ritual for Bobby Cox until about two years ago - the left side of the infield is the most popular spot.

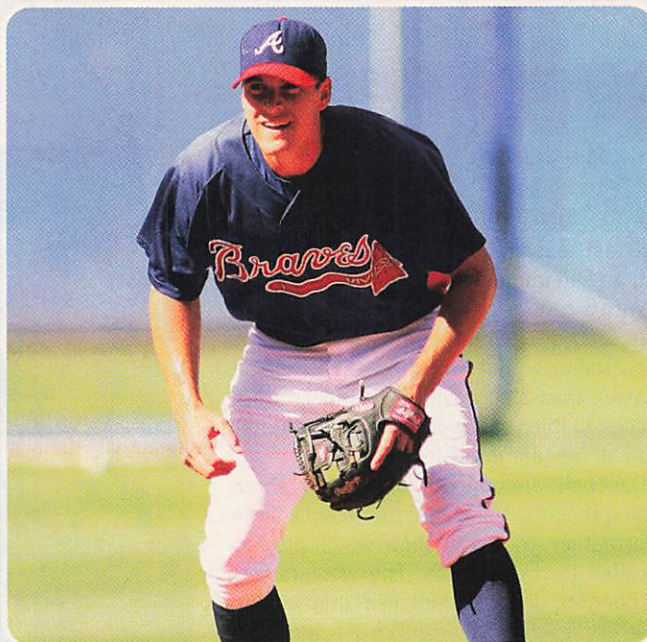
"I always play short or third, but third base is my favorite," admitted rightfielder Jeff Francoeur. "It's fun, but I can't throw across the diamond to save my life."

"Sometimes I'm able to go out there and see how bad my reflexes are," offered pitcher Tim Hudson with a laugh when



ALISON SHARPEFFS

Matt Diaz, standing near the batting cage, knows the importance of getting both fungo flyballs from coaches and balls hit off batting practice pitchers.



ALISON SHARPEFFS

After being hit with a line drive last spring, Kelly Johnson knows it's critical to be "heads-up" during infield practice.

asked about taking BP grounders at shortstop.

But the dream of being Chipper Jones or Yunel Escobar for a day usually ends pretty quickly once reality sets in - when the first batted ball approaches.

"The ball gets to you pretty quick on the infield," said Hudson, who has frequently taken the brunt of sharply hit comebackers. "A couple of hard liners to you scares the [heck] out of you, and you back up to where you're supposed to be - in the outfield."

"That's why I don't play the infield," added Francoeur, who is doing just fine in the outfield, winning his first Gold Glove in 2007. "The ball comes too quick out there."

Of course, outfielders take balls in the outfield, too, where they face some danger as well, but leftfielder Matt Diaz says communication is the key to survival out there.

"There are always pitchers behind you telling you if a high flyball is coming at you," he said. "If a line drive is coming at you, you get plenty of 'heads-ups.'"

Diaz emphasizes the importance of tracking live batted balls in BP because of the difference in speed from a coach's fungos.

"If you get a flyball off a fungo bat, it's not nearly the same as a ball hit off a batting practice pitcher," said Diaz, who fielded .988 last season with only two errors. "So, it's the only time an outfielder can get true work on flyballs. Outfielders who don't take advantage of that, it's a little foolish. It's a great time to get some work in."

Johnson, who has played the outfield with the Braves and who worked countless hours last off-season to turn himself into a second baseman, agrees.

"You could be facing Roy Oswalt or Roger Clemens, when maybe you're not going to have a great day, but you go out on defense and work on that," said Johnson. "It's kind of like working on shooting a basketball: You have every opportunity to make it happen and do the things you need to do correctly."

"For me, that's one of those things that should be mandatory. I like getting out there. Our whole team likes getting out there."

DIAZ A GEM AT SITUATIONAL HITTING, TOO

BY STEVE FALL

MATT DIAZ NOT ONLY BATTED

.338 last season, but when pitchers got him out, he still found ways to help the Braves.

With a runner on third and less than two outs, Diaz drove them home 11 times in 12 opportunities. That 91.7 success rate led all Braves. Diaz also advanced runners from second to third base with nobody out better than all his teammates.

Baseball announcers often talk about "doing the little things." Until recently, little information existed to show which players excelled in these areas. The website retrosheet.org features detailed information on every "event" in the course of a game. So now it's possible to find this information.

Advancing a baserunner from second base with nobody out enables a team to improve its chances of scoring without a basehit. The numbers reveal that not all the Braves excelled in this situation like Diaz did.

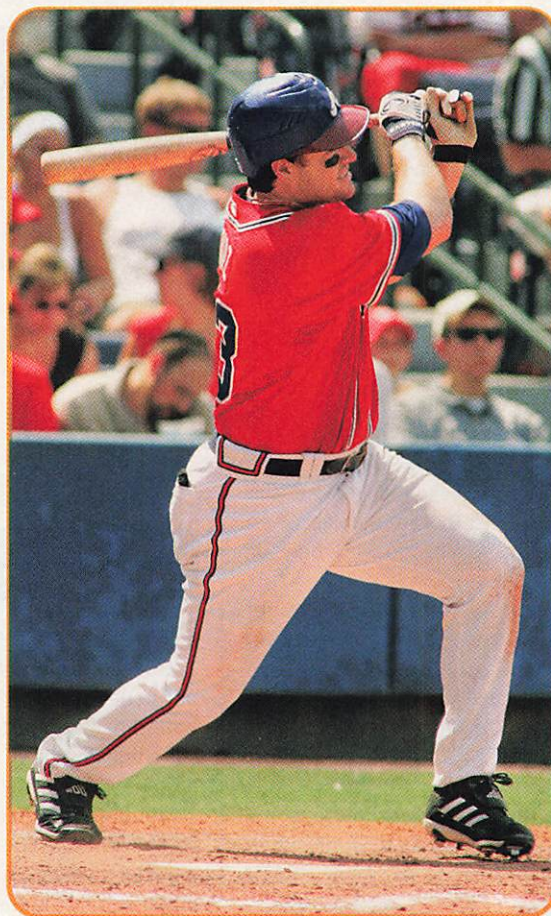
Since this maneuver has minimal impact in one-sided games – clubs are more inclined to play for the big inning then – only plays with the Braves leading or trailing by three or fewer runs got considered in this research. Also, plate appearances that resulted in walks and hit batters weren't included. Those results basically passed the situation on to the next hitter.

Atlanta batters faced this scenario on 159 occasions last season, slightly less than once per game. They got the runner to third base (or all the way home) 93 times. That works out to 58.5 percent. That fell short of the major league average, which saw runners advanced successfully 60.1 percent of the time.

Among Braves that had at least five opportunities in these circumstances, Diaz had the best rate of success. He advanced six of seven baserunners (85.7 percent). Edgar Renteria moved the runner on 15 of 24 occasions (62.5).

Chipper Jones (14-25, 56.0), Jeff Francoeur (7-13, 53.8), Andruw Jones (7-13, 53.8), and Brian McCann (11-21, 52.4) all finished below the team average. In general, the club's power hitters fared worse in this category. They likely focused on driving the ball, as opposed to moving the runner, on many of these occasions.

Performance in yet another common situation impacts the win column. When



Matt Diaz led the Braves in driving in runs from third with less than two outs and in advancing runners from second with no outs.

Braves players batted with a runner on third base and less than two outs, how often did they score him?

Atlanta faced this situation 307 times in 2007, and their hitter drove in the run 172 times. That 56.0 success percentage trailed the major league average of 57.3. In addition to Diaz, rookie Yunel Escobar excelled in a limited number of these opportunities (8-9, 88.9). Chipper Jones (21-32, 65.6) and McCann (16-26, 61.5) also fared well.

Andruw Jones (27-46, 58.7) and Francoeur (21-38, 55.3) finished near the league average. Renteria (10-21, 47.6) and Kelly Johnson (11-25, 44.0) struggled in these spots.

With powerful switch-hitters Chipper Jones and Mark Teixeira batting back-to-

back in the order, Bobby Cox enjoys a luxury rarely seen in history. Few, if any, ballclubs have had two better long ball hitters that bat from both sides of the plate.

Nineteen teams in history have had a pair of switch-hitters post at least 20 homers apiece. One of those clubs – the 1995 California Angels – had three reach this level. Only one NL club has done this in the past 10 years. Carlos Beltran and Lance Berkman both topped 20 home runs for the 2004 Astros.

Jones and Teixeira seem poised to join this group. They both have hit at least 20 home runs in every season that they've played. The 2007 Braves came close to joining the list, even though Teixeira didn't join the club until July 31. He hit 17 homers for Atlanta, and Jones hit 29.

Should they both stay healthy, Teixeira and Jones could also top 25 homers apiece. That has only been achieved by four sets of teammates: Ken Singleton and Eddie Murray on the 1979 Orioles, Murray and Mike Young on the 1985 Orioles, Murray and Bobby Bonilla for the 1993 Mets, and

Jorge Posada and Bernie Williams for the Yankees' 2000 World Championship team.

No team has ever had two 30-homer switch-hitters in the same season. The 2008 Braves have a shot to change that.

Based on their track records, Teixeira and Jones both also have a good chance to drive in 100 runs this season. They each reached that level in 2007, though Teixeira had 49 of his 105 RBIs with Texas. He's topped the century mark in four straight years.

Only two pairs of switch-hitting teammates have driven in 100 runs apiece. Ted Simmons and Reggie Smith became the first pair in 1974 for the Cardinals. Murray and Singleton did this for the 1980 Orioles.

Should Jones and Teixeira both deliver 30 home runs and 100 RBIs in 2008, they will become the most potent switch-hitting teammates in history.

INDIVIDUAL BATTING (MOST)

HITTING STREAK	18 GAMES	RENTERIA (APRIL 20-MAY 12)
HOME RUN STREAK	3 GAMES	TEIHEIRA, AUG. 1-3 & McCANN, AUG. 20-22.
RBI STREAK	5 GAMES, TWICE	LAST: TEIHEIRA, AUG. 7-11
RUNS, GAME	4, FOUR TIMES	LAST: DIAZ, AUG. 29 AT FLA.
HITS, GAME	6	HARRIS, JULY 21 VS. ST.L
TOTAL BASES, GAME	10, THREE TIMES	LAST: TEIHEIRA, AUG. 20 AT CIN.
DOUBLES, GAME	3	McCANN, MAY 19 (2) AT BOS.
TRIPLES, GAME	2	HARRIS, JULY 21 VS. ST.L
HOME RUNS, GAME	2, 13 TIMES	LAST: DIAZ, AUG. 29 AT FLA.
EXTRA-BASE HITS, GAME	3, EIGHT TIMES	LAST: DIAZ, AUG. 29 AT FLA.
RBI'S, GAME	6	HARRIS, JULY 21 VS. ST.L & TEIHEIRA, AUG. 20 AT CIN.
STOLEN BASES, GAME	3	HARRIS, JUNE 30 AT FLA.

CLUB BATTING (MOST)

RUNS, GAME	14, FOUR TIMES	LAST: AUG. 20 AT CIN.
RUNS, GAME, BOTH CLUBS	23	AUG. 2 VS. HOU. (L, 12-11, IN 14)
RUNS, INNING	7	MAY 30 (8TH), JULY 21 (4TH), AUG. 1 (1ST)
HITS, GAME	22	JUNE 27 VS. WASH. & AUG. 2 VS. HOU. (14 INNINGS)
HITS, GAME, BOTH CLUBS	33	AUG. 2 VS. HOU.
HITS, INNING	7	(8TH) MAY 30 AT MIL.
DOUBLES, GAME	9	JULY 29 AT ARI
HOME RUNS, GAME	4	JULY 31 VS. HOU, AUG. 18 VS. ARI & AUG. 20 AT CIN
EXTRA-BASE HITS, GAME	12	MAY 19 (2) AT BOS
WALKS, GAME	10	JUNE 29 AT FLA
STRIKEOUTS, GAME	19	JULY 18 VS. CIN (15 INN.) & AUG. 28 AT FLA (11 INN.)
STRIKEOUTS, GAME, BOTH CLUBS	35	JULY 18 VS. CIN
STOLEN BASES, GAME	5	JUNE 30 AT FLA
LEFT ON BASE, GAME	14, THREE TIMES	LAST: SEPT. 14 AT WSH (13 INN.)

INDIVIDUAL PITCHING (MOST)

INNINGS, GAME, STARTER	9	HUDSON, SEPT. 16 AT WASH.
INNINGS, GAME, RELIEVER	3	SEVEN TIMES, LAST: MAHAY, AUG. 2 VS. HOU.
STRIKEOUTS, GAME, STARTER	12, TWICE	LAST: SMOLTZ, AUG. 19 VS. ARIZ.
STRIKEOUTS, GAME, RELIEVER	6	VILLARREAL, JULY 1 AT FLA.
CONSECUTIVE SCORELESS IP, STARTER	22	HUDSON, APRIL 15-25
CONSECUTIVE SCORELESS IP, RELIEVER	15.2	SORIANO (APRIL 22-MAY 30)
CONSECUTIVE HOMERLESS IP	66	HUDSON
LONGEST WINNING STREAK, STARTER	9 GAMES	HUDSON, JUNE 25-AUG. 20

CLUB PITCHING (MOST)

RUNS ALLOWED, GAME	13	MAY 13, MAY 19 (1) & MAY 27
RUNS ALLOWED, INNING	7	MAY 27 (5TH) VS. PHI
STRIKEOUTS, GAME	16	JULY 18 VS. CIN
WALKS ALLOWED, GAME	13	APRIL 29 AT COL
HITS ALLOWED, GAME	18	MAY 12 AT PIT
HOME RUNS ALLOWED, GAME	5	JUNE 20 VS. BOS
CONSECUTIVE HOMERLESS IP	69	APRIL 8 (3RD) - APRIL 17 (9TH)

CLUB & INDIVIDUAL FIELDING (MOST)

CONSECUTIVE ERRORLESS GAMES, CLUB	4	APRIL 23-27
CONSECUTIVE ERRORLESS GAMES, INDIVIDUAL	89	FRANCOEUR, JUNE 5-SEPT. 14
CONSECUTIVE ERRORLESS INNINGS, CLUB	42	APRIL 7-12
DOUBLEPLAYS TURNED, GAME	4	MAY 11 AT PITT.

STARTERS VS. RELIEVERS

STARTERS	RELIEVERS
ERA	3.54
4.45	
AVG. ALLOWED	.242
.269	

OUTFIELD ASSISTS

FRANCOEUR	19
DIAZ	4
HARRIS	4
A. JONES	3

AVERAGE INNINGS PER START

HUDSON	6.2
SMOLTZ	6.2
BENNETT	5.2
JAMES	5.1
CARLYLE	5.1
DAVIES	5.0
CORMIER	5.0
REYES	4.2
REDMAN	4.0
LEREW	4.0

GAME-WINNING RBIs

McCANN	13
C. JONES	12
FRANCOEUR	10
A. JONES	9

BACK-TO-BACK HOMERS

5/11	AT PIT A. JONES-FRANCOEUR
6/5 (1)	FLA SALTALAMACCHIA-WOODWARD
7/13	PIT A. JONES-McCANN
8/9	AT NYM C. JONES-TEIHEIRA
8/18	ARI FRANCOEUR-A. JONES
9/26	AT PHI C. JONES-TEIHEIRA





SNYDER RETIRES AFTER 50 SEASONS; REYES, SCHAFFER WIN TOP AWARDS

PAUL SNYDER, who recently concluded his 50th season in professional baseball, retired as the Braves' director of baseball operations on Dec. 31.

The 68-year-old Snyder is widely acclaimed as one of the greatest scouts and evaluators of talent the game has ever known. Despite his reputation and incredible list of accomplishments, Snyder decided to leave baseball in a manner similar to the way he conducted his business - out of the limelight and without any fanfare.

"It was time for my wife, Petie, to determine our travel itinerary instead of baseball and my responsibilities (doing it)," said Snyder, who has battled health problems over the past 40 years. "It will be a change, but it will be good for both of us."

Snyder was signed by the Braves in 1957 and played in the minor leagues before being slowed by a back operation in 1960. Three years later, he served as player-manager at Greenville, and joined the Atlanta front office in 1966. Snyder held a variety of jobs in the organization, including director of stadium operations in 1967. He became assistant minor league administrator in 1973 and later emerged as scouting director.

Snyder teamed with then-general manager Bobby Cox in the mid-1980s to revamp the Braves' approach to scouting and signing players. With a greater emphasis on pitching, their efforts served as the foundation that began to reap rewards with a trip to the World Series in 1991.

Throughout his tenure, Snyder lived by the edict, "Never ask anyone to do a job you wouldn't do yourself." His leadership and professionalism had major impacts on everyone he worked with, a list that includes such protégés as Philadelphia farm director Mike Arbuckle, Kansas City general manager Dayton Moore, and Braves scouting director Roy Clark.

"Paul garnered so much respect in this game," said Kurt Kemp, Atlanta's director of player personnel. "He was adamant that our scouts dress professionally, which included no jeans when working at the ballpark. I know scouts with other teams who went back to their hotels and changed out of jeans when they found out Paul was going to be at the ballpark that night."

Among his many honors, Snyder was inducted into the Braves Hall of Fame in 2005, and at the 2006 Winter Meetings, he was crowned "King of Baseball."



Paul Snyder, who came out of retirement in 2006 to be director of baseball operations, was crowned King of Baseball that winter by Pat O'Connor, president of Minor League Baseball.

MINOR LEAGUE AWARDS

JO-JO REYES, a strong candidate to win a spot in the Atlanta starting rotation this year, and Jordan Schaffer, a contender for the vacancy in center field, are winners of the two most-prestigious honors the franchise awards each off-season.

Reyes is the winner of the Phil Niekro Award as the most outstanding pitcher in the farm system in 2007, and Schaffer is the Hank Aaron Award recipient as the top hitter in the farm system. Those awards and others will be presented to the recipients on the evening of Feb. 2 at the Braves 400 Club's annual Eddie Glennon Gameboree, set for the Marriott Century Center.

Putting together his second straight spectacular season, Reyes opened last year at Mississippi and posted an 8-1

record with a 3.56 ERA in 13 starts. The left-hander proceeded to pitch for both Richmond and Atlanta during the last half of the season and registered a 4-0 mark with a 1.00 ERA in six starts with the R-Braves, then splitting four decisions during his initial taste of the major leagues.

"When you look at the entire body of work from last season, Jo-Jo had an impressive year from start to finish," said Kurt Kemp. "He made outstanding adjustments everywhere we put him, and pitched well enough to contribute at the major league level. We were very pleased with the season he had and believe he has a chance to be a significant piece of the puzzle in Atlanta for some time to come."

Schaffer rebounded from a disappointing 2006 season at the plate (.240 at Rome) to lead all of minor league baseball with 176

hits last year, resulting in his name being included in talk about who will replace Andruw Jones.

A spectacular fielder in center, Schaffer, who just turned 21 in September, started '07 strong and never let up. He punished pitchers in the South Atlantic League at a .373 clip with five home runs and 20 RBIs in 30 games prior to an early May promotion to Class A Myrtle Beach. He maintained his effectiveness in the Carolina League by batting .294. Schaffer then spent October and early November in the Arizona Fall League, where he batted a robust .324.

"Jordan had an extremely productive season all the way around," Kemp said. "He had a terrific season at two different levels, maintaining his discipline and approach at a higher level of play. He then continued to do the same thing in Arizona, all the while

playing as well in center field as anyone in the minor leagues."

Two other award winners helped Richmond win the International League championship last season. Dave Brundage christened his career with the Braves by being named the farm system's Manager of the Year. Brundage, who joined Atlanta after managing the previous six seasons in the Seattle organization, led the R-Braves to a wild-card playoff spot prior to defeating Scranton/Wilkes-Barre and Durham for the Governor's Cup. His efforts helped Richmond win its first IL title since 1994.

Aiding Brundage was third baseman Wes Timmons, who provided veteran leadership and outstanding defense while hitting .256 with 52 RBIs. Timmons also participated in numerous off-the-field events for the R-Braves, which helped him earn the Bill Lucas Award, representative of the top player in the organization in terms of character and all-around performance.

"Wes is an outstanding young man who has contributed to this organization in so many different ways since he signed in 2002," Kemp said. "He really exemplifies this award of doing his job in a professional manner. He is a classic Braves player, both on and off the field."

WINTER ROUNDUP

SEVERAL BRAVES played well in winter ball, headlined by Brayan Pena. The Gigantes catcher ranked among the league leaders in several offensive categories in the Dominican Republic, tying for second with nine doubles and placing third with 13 extra-base hits and 25 RBIs, fourth with 44 hits, fifth with a .418 slugging percentage and seventh with a .288 batting average. Pena, who endured an injury-marred 2007 in which he played a variety of positions at Triple-A Richmond after starting the season as Atlanta's backup catcher, worked extensively behind the plate this winter and will be a strong contender for the backup job in the majors.

Centerfielder Gregor Blanco also improved his chances of being considered a candidate for a job with Atlanta after putting together a solid winter season with La Guaira. Blanco paced the Venezuelan league with 79 hits and a .445 on-base percentage, placing second with a .345 batting average and 50 runs scored. He is an excellent defensive player and a true leadoff hitter.

Young minor league players rarely get a chance to play in the winter leagues, but

that was not the case for a pair of left-handers who spent the 2007 season at rookie-level Danville. Jose Ortegano, who paced the Appalachian League with a 1.48 ERA last season, and Edgar Osuna, who ranked third in the Appy with a 2.47 ERA, had success against veteran competition in Venezuela and Mexico, respectively.

Ortegano went 2-2 with a 2.19 ERA in 17 games with Caracas. The southpaw surrendered only 32 hits in 37 innings, striking out 27 and walking 10. Osuna posted a 2-0 record with a 4.38 ERA in 25 games for Hermosillo. Used exclusively as a situational reliever, he allowed only six earned runs. Both lefthanders are leading candidates to open the 2008 season at Rome.

One other winter league note of interest includes outfielder Carl Loadenthal leading the Venezuelan League with 11 stolen bases despite not playing after Nov. 16.

TO NEW PLAYERS

THE BRAVES signed three former Yankees pitchers to minor-league contracts in January, headlined by righthander Matt DeSalvo, who made six starts with New York in 2007. Joining DeSalvo as newcomers to the Atlanta organization are fellow righthanders and ex-Yanks Ferdin Tejada and Colter Bean, as well as righty Jorge Campillo, infielders Javier Guzman and Luis Valdez, outfielder Reggie Taylor, and catcher J.C. Boscan.

DeSalvo became a free agent after the Yankees failed to tender him a 2008 contract in December. The 27-year-old made his major league debut last season on May 7 with New York and proceeded to go 1-3 with a 6.18 ERA. The Marietta (Ohio) College product spent most of 2007 at Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre, where he went 9-5 with a 2.70 ERA in 20 starts, allowing only 92 hits in 113 1/3 innings.

Bean, 31, also reached the major leagues last year, going 0-1 with a 12.00 ERA in three outings. The 6-foot-6, 255-pounder spent the rest of the season at Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre, where he won both decisions with a 5.95 ERA in 28 games. The 25-year-old Tejada spent his first five seasons in the minors as a short-stop prior to moving to the mound in 2005. He played 2007 at Class A Charleston, where the Dominican product was 2-2 with a 2.55 ERA in 31 appearances.

The Braves also re-signed a pair of catchers, Corky Miller and Ray Serrano, as

six-year minor league free agents. Miller, who batted .210 with four home runs and 25 RBIs last year in Triple-A, played 12 games with Atlanta in 2007. Serrano returns after playing in 35 games last season at Double-A Mississippi and hitting .301 with three home runs and 15 RBIs.

NOTES

Rightfielder Doug Clark, who was a catalyst on Richmond's International League championship club last season, was on the verge of signing a lucrative deal to play in South Korea. He talked at length with Kurt Kemp about re-signing with the Braves prior to receiving strong interest from abroad. Clark returned to Mexico with Navojoa this winter and hit .309 with seven home runs and 22 RBIs in 64 games...

Third baseman Eric Campbell, who was suspended last August and sent home from Myrtle Beach, is scheduled to return to organization for spring training. He had an injury-plagued season in the Carolina League, which contributed to his .221 batting average with 14 home runs and 49 RBIs.

DANVILLE BRAVES

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JUNE

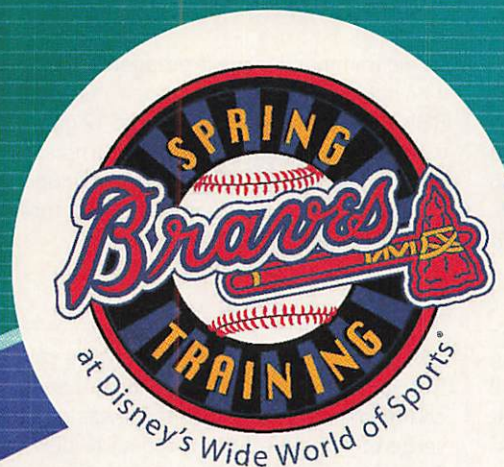
17	AT BURLINGTON
18-19	BURLINGTON
20-22	AT GREENEVILLE
23-25	AT PRINCETON
26-28	GREENEVILLE
29-30	AT JOHNSON CITY

JULY

1	AT JOHNSON CITY
2-3	BURLINGTON
4-6	AT KINGSFORT
8-10	BLUEFIELD
11-13	BURLINGTON
14-16	AT BRISTOL
17-19	AT PRINCETON
20-22	PULASKI
23-25	AT BLUEFIELD
26-28	JOHNSON CITY
30-31	PULASKI

AUGUST

1	PULASKI
2-4	AT PULASKI
5-7	AT BLUEFIELD
8-10	PRINCETON
11-13	KINGSFORT
14-16	AT ELIZABETHTON



SPRING TRAINING TICKETS

Lower Level Reserved	\$23.50
Upper Level Reserved	\$20.50
Bleacher Reserved	\$20.50
General Admission	\$14.50

Individual tickets are on sale at Braves.com, the Disney Wide World of Sports box office, and Ticketmaster.com or (407) 839-3900.

* Champion Stadium opens 3 hours before game time.

5-GAME MINI PLAN - \$102.50

Mar. 8 - Houston, Mar. 10 - St. Louis, Mar. 12 - Cleveland, Mar. 15 - Tampa Bay, Mar. 20 - Detroit.

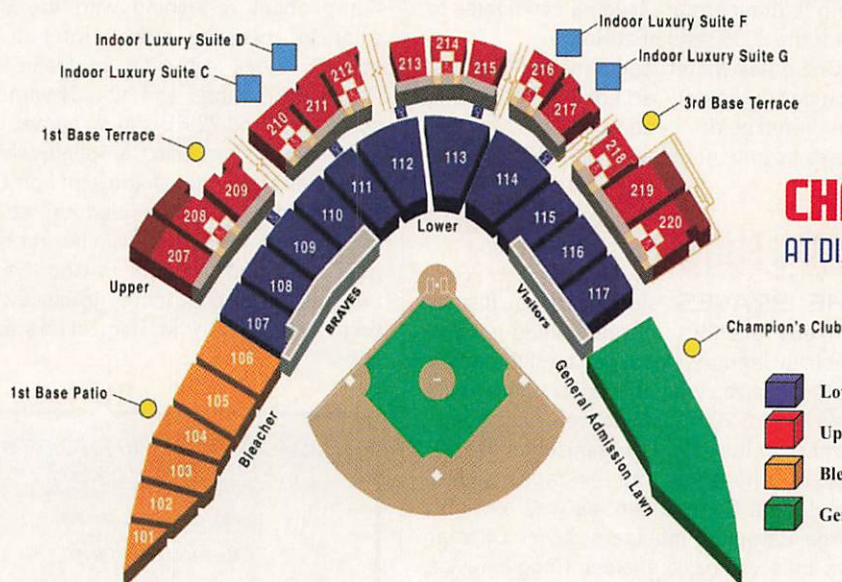
1ST HALF 3-GAME MINI PLAN - \$61.50

Mar. 2 - Houston, Mar. 9 - St. Louis, Mar. 11 - Washington.

2ND HALF 3-GAME MINI PLAN - \$61.50

Mar. 20 - Detroit, Mar. 23 - Houston, Mar. 27 - Mets.

NOTE: Mini-Plans include best available Upper Level Reserved or Bleacher Reserved seats. Call (407) 939-GAME (4263) for Season, Group and Mini-Plan tickets. Full Seasons Tickets are \$320 for Lower Level Reserved and \$280 for Upper Level Reserved and Bleacher Reserved.



CHAMPION STADIUM AT DISNEY'S WIDE WORLD OF SPORTS

- Lower Level Reserved
- Upper Level Reserved
- Bleacher Reserved
- General Admission

FEBRUARY/MARCH

■ DISNEY

■ AWAY

Tentative; subject to change; times pending.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			27 1:05 PM UNIV. OF GEORGIA	28 1:10 PM LAD @ VERO BEACH	29 1:05 PM LAD	1 1:05 PM HOU @ KISSIMMEE
2 1:05 PM HOU	3 1:10 PM NYM @ PORT ST. LUCIE	4 1:05 PM PHI	5 1:05 PM CLE @ WINTER HAVEN	6 1:05 PM DET @ LAKELAND	7 1:05 PM DET	8 1:05 PM CIN 1:05 PM HOU
9 1:05 PM STL	10 1:05 PM STL	11 7:05 PM WAS	12 7:05 PM CLE	13 1:05 PM DET @ LAKELAND	14 1:05 PM PHI @ CLEARWATER	15 1:05 PM HOU 1:05 PM TAM
16 1:05 PM STL @ JUPITER	17 1:05 PM STL @ JUPITER	18	19 7:05 PM HOU @ KISSIMMEE	20 7:05 PM DET	21 1:05 PM CLE	22 1:05 PM WAS @ VIERA
23 1:05 PM HOU	24 1:05 PM CLE @ WINTER HAVEN	25 1:05 PM NYM @ PORT ST. LUCIE	26 1:05 PM WAS	27 1:05 PM NYM	28 7:05 PM CLE @ TURNER FIELD	29 1:05 PM CLE @ TURNER FIELD

Mar. 8 vs. Cincinnati @ Sarasota, Mar. 15 vs. Houston @ Kissimmee.

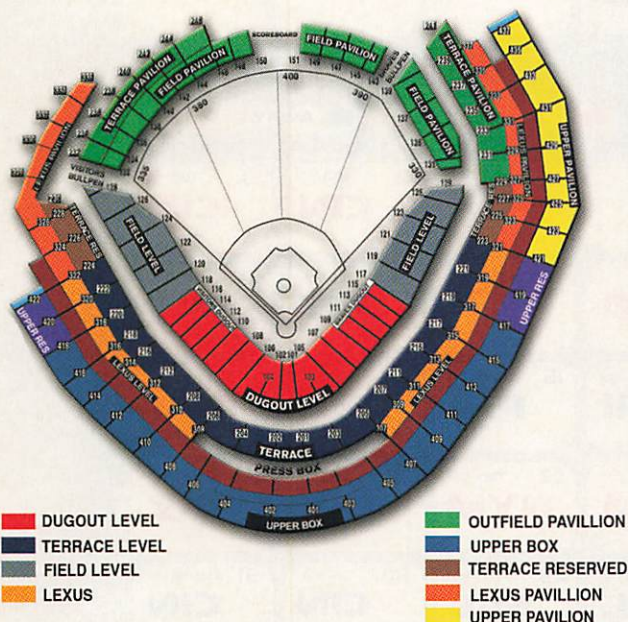
* SPLIT SQUAD

MLB

TO PURCHASE SEASON TICKETS OR FOR MORE INFORMATION,
CALL (404) 577-9100 OR VISIT braves.com

TICKET INFO

At press time, the Braves had not announced information about individual tickets for the 2008 season. Refundable deposits of \$100 for full and partial season tickets are being accepted at Braves.com or by calling (404) 577-9100.



MUSEUM & TOUR INFO

The Ivan Allen Jr. Braves Museum features more than 500 Braves artifacts that trace the team's history from its beginnings in Boston (1871-1952) to Milwaukee (1953-65) to Atlanta (1966-present). It is located on the northwest side of Turner Field at aisle 134. The museum opens two and a half hours before each game and closes in the middle of the seventh inning. The museum is open year-round and is the starting point of one-hour guided tours of Turner Field. Tours leave on the hour.

Tour reservations are not necessary for individuals or groups of less than 20 people. Tickets can be purchased the day of the tour at the main ticket window. Free parking in the Green lot.

Admission to the museum during games is one token (\$2) and \$5 on non-game days. Tour tickets are \$10 for adults, \$5 for children and \$7 for groups of 20 or more. Walk-up tickets can be purchased at the ticket window. Groups of 20 or more and school groups must make reservations two weeks in advance by calling (404) 614-2311.

HOURS OF OPERATION

APRIL - OCTOBER

Monday - Saturday
Sunday

9 a.m. - 3 p.m.
1 - 3 p.m.

OCTOBER - MARCH

Monday - Saturday

10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

DEC. 23-JAN. 3

CLOSED

TOUR TICKETS

ADULTS

\$10

CHILDREN 13 and Under

\$5

*Subject to change

Tours not available when the Braves have afternoon home games



FAQs & CONTACTS

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- w Call 1-877-655-CHOP (2467). It's best to call between 10 a.m.-6 p.m. (Eastern) Monday-Friday when representatives are available to assist you. At other times or in the event all lines are busy, you can leave a us voice mail message. Please have your mailing info ready.
- w Write us at ChopTalk, P.O. Box 80750, Conyers, Ga. 30013-8750.
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Please notify us in writing of any address change so you don't miss a single issue of ChopTalk. Send your name, account

number, old address and new address to: ChopTalk, P.O. Box 80750, Conyers, Ga. 30013-8750. Or you can e-mail us at Letters@ChopTalkonline.com. The post office will NOT do this for you.

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TERM	DOMESTIC	CANADA & MEXICO	OTHER FOREIGN
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2 YEARS	\$67.95	\$101.95	\$141.95

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Rates for gift subscriptions are the same as above. We will send the recipient a personalized ChopTalk gift card (please specify General or Happy Holidays!). When ordering, be sure to include the recipient's name and address, along with your name, address and phone number.

TENTATIVE: SUBJECT TO CHANGE. TIMES, BROADCAST INFORMATION TO BE ANNOUNCED.

FOR SEASON, GROUP AND SUITE TICKET INFORMATION, CALL (404) 577-9100 OR VISIT braves.com

MARCH/APRIL

TURNER FIELD

AWAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
30 8:05 PM WSH OPENING DAY	31 TBD PIT HOME OPENER	1	2 TBD PIT	3 TBD PIT	4 TBD NYM	5 3:55 PM NYM
6 TBD NYM	7 8:35 PM COL	8 8:35 PM COL	9 8:35 PM COL	10 3:05 PM COL	11 7:35 PM WSH	12 1:05 PM WSH
13 1:35 PM WSH	14	15 7:10 PM FLA	16 7:10 PM FLA	17 7:10 PM FLA	18 TBD LAD	19 3:55 PM LAD
20 TBD LAD	21 TBD WSH	22 TBD WSH	23 TBD FLA	24 TBD FLA	25 7:10 PM NYM	26 1:10 PM PM NYM
27 1:10 PM NYM	28	29 7:10 PM WSH	30 4:35 PM WSH			

MAY

TURNER FIELD

AWAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1	2 TBD CIN	3 TBD CIN
4 TBD CIN	5	6 TBD SD	7 TBD SD	8 TBD SD	9 7:05 PM PIT	10 7:05 PM PIT
11 1:35 PM PIT	12 12:35 PM PIT	13 7:05 PM PHI	14 7:05 PM PHI	15 7:05 PM PHI	16 TBD OAK	17 TBD OAK
18 TBD OAK	19	20 TBD NYM	21 TBD NYM	22 TBD NYM	23 TBD AZ	24 3:55 PM AZ
25 TBD AZ	26 TBD AZ	27 8:05 PM MIL	28 8:05 PM MIL	29 1:05 PM MIL	30 7:10 PM CIN	31 3:55 PM PM CIN

JUNE

TURNER FIELD

AWAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 1:15 PM CIN	2 TBD FLA	3 TBD FLA	4 TBD FLA	5 TBD FLA	6 TBD PHI	7 TBD PHI
8 TBD PHI	9	10 8:05 PM CHC	11 8:05 PM CHC	12 2:20 PM CHC	13 10:05 PM LAA	14 9:05 PM LAA
15 TBD LAA	16	17 8:05 PM TX	18 8:05 PM TX	19 2:05 PM TX	20 TBD SEA	21 TBD SEA
22 TBD SEA	23 TBD MIL	24 TBD MIL	25 TBD MIL	26	27 7:07 PM TOR	28 1:07 PM PM TOR
29 1:07 PM TOR	30					

JULY

ALL-STAR GAME TURNER FIELD AWAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 TBD PHI	2 TBD PHI	3 TBD PHI	4 TBD HOU	5 TBD HOU
6 TBD HOU	7 10:10 PM LAD	8 10:10 PM LAD	9 10:10 PM LAD	10	11 10:05 PM SD	12 10:05 PM SD
13 4:05 PM SD	14	15 8:00 PM ALL-STAR GAME YANKEE STADIUM	16	17	18 TBD WSH	19 TBD WSH
20 TBD WSH	21 7:10 PM FLA	22 7:10 PM FLA	23 7:10 PM FLA	24	25 7:05 PM PHI	26 3:55 PM PHI
27 1:35 PM PHI	28 TBD STL	29 TBD STL	30 TBD STL	31 TBD STL		

AUGUST

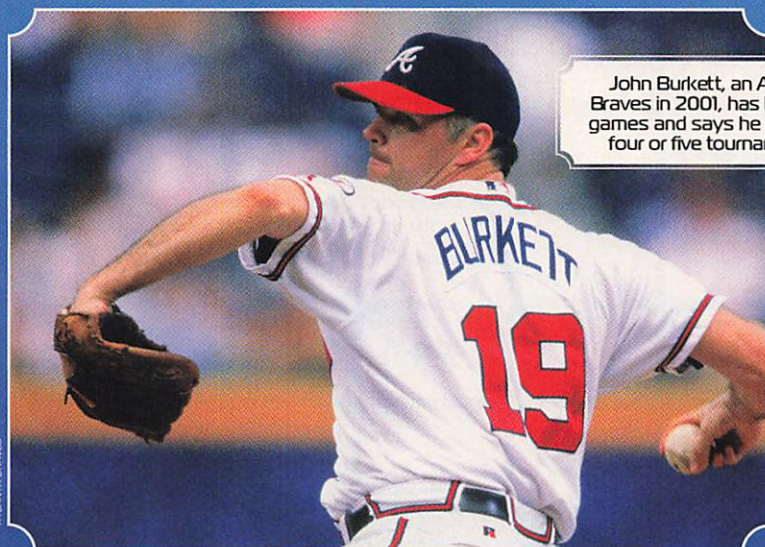
TURNER FIELD AWAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1 TBD MIL	2 3:55 PM MIL
3 TBD MIL	4 10:15 PM SF	5 10:15 PM SF	6 3:35 PM SF	7 9:40 PM AZ	8 9:40 PM AZ	9 3:55 PM AZ
10 4:10 PM AZ	11	12 TBD CHC	13 TBD CHC	14 TBD CHC	15 TBD SF	16 TBD SF
17 TBD SF	18 TBD SF	19 7:10 PM NYM	20 7:10 PM NYM	21 7:10 PM NYM	22 8:15 PM STL	23 3:55 PM STL
24 2:15 PM STL	25	26 TBD FLA	27 TBD FLA	28 TBD FLA	29 7:35 PM WSH	30 7:10 PM WSH
31 1:35 PM WSH						

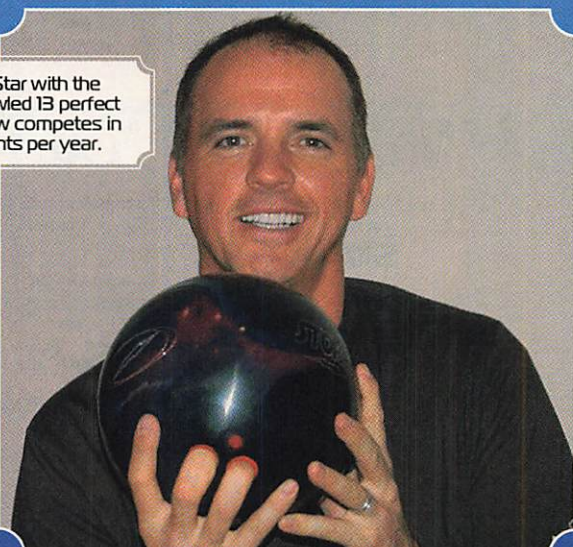
SEPTEMBER

TURNER FIELD AWAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
TBD	1 1:10 PM FLA	2 7:10 PM FLA	3 1:10 PM FLA	4 TBD WSH	5 TBD WSH	6 TBD WSH
7 TBD WSH	8	9 TBD COL	10 TBD COL	11 TBD COL	12 7:10 PM NYM	13 3:55 PM NYM
14 1:10 PM NYM	15	16 TBD PHI	17 TBD PHI	18 TBD PHI	19 TBD NYM	20 TBD NYM
21 TBD NYM	22 7:05 PM PHI	23 7:05 PM PHI	24 7:05 PM PHI	25	26 8:05 PM HOU	27 7:05 PM HOU
28 2:05 PM HOU	29	30				



John Burkett, an All-Star with the Braves in 2001, has bowled 13 perfect games and says he now competes in four or five tournaments per year.



ROLLING ALONG

The Ball Is Much Bigger and Heavier, But Burkett's Still Throwing Strikes

BY BRIAN KNAPP

FOUR YEARS HAVE PASSED since John Burkett last toed the rubber in a major league game, but he can still summon a strike when he needs one. At age 43, he now weaves a web of success away from bullpens and rosin bags, quietly pursuing his other competitive passion in life.

A professional bowler in his spare time, the former Braves righthander (2000-01) competed in the GEICO Classic a year ago. Awarded a commissioner's exemption from Professional Bowlers Association CEO Fred Schreyer, Burkett finished 54th out of 64 participants. He earned \$1,800, every cent of which he donated to charity.

"I beat 10 guys who were touring pros," Burkett said. "It's like going out on the golf course and competing against Tiger Woods and those guys."

Schreyer touted Burkett as a "well-respected and talented bowler" whose "past performances alongside the greatest bowlers in the world speak for themselves."

If the challenges he faced negotiating a field of full-time professionals were not enough, Burkett was also confronted by the most difficult lane conditions he had ever experienced. For a time, he slipped into last place.

"It was like golfing in the U.S. Open," said Burkett, who lives outside of Dallas in Southlake, Texas. "You see guys on tour shooting 160s, 170s and 180s on TV and think, 'I can do better than that.' What people don't realize is the [lane] conditions are much more difficult [on the PBA Tour]."

Burkett held his own in previous events, as well. He came in 32nd with a 217 average in the 2002 Brunswick ProSource Don Carter Classic in Dallas and, two years later, placed 185th out of 590 competitors in the 2004 United States Bowling Congress

Masters – an annual tournament featuring the top professional and amateur bowlers in the world.

The third of Ken and Arlette Burkett's four boys, he was born into a lower middle class family in the small town of Beaver in western Pennsylvania. He considers himself the city's "second most famous" native behind Amber Brkich, the 29-year-old winner of the CBS reality show "Survivor: All Stars."

Introduced to bowling at a young age, Burkett showed a natural talent for the sport. By the time he reached elementary school, he was already entering tournaments.

Burkett bowled the first of his 13 perfect 300 games (12 straight strikes) as a 17-year-old in December 1981. He rolled 21 consecutive strikes at one point, but admits his knees quivered as he prepared for his final frame at Sims Lanes in Beaver Falls, Pa., which neighbored his hometown.

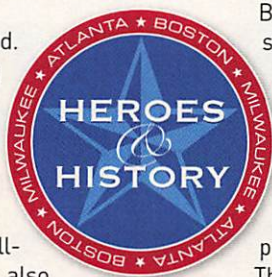
"The whole place stopped," he said. "There were like 40 lanes there. It was nerve-racking. The 16-pound ball felt like it weighed 50."

Three years later, Burkett bowled his first 800 series – a cumulative score over the course of three successive games. Five more 800 series have followed, and today, he carries an impressive 231 average.

"I'm pretty much self-taught," Burkett said. "I have kind of a natural ability."

Despite his success, Burkett has no immediate plans to tour full-time. Parenting – he and his wife of 19 years, Laura, have two daughters and a son – consumes much of his time, interest and energy.

"It's a big commitment as far as time goes," Burkett said. "I really love competing, but I love being with my family, too. I'm sure



I'll [bowl] a little, but I'll never go out on tour. I'm devoting my time to my kids. When they stop wanting to hang out with us, then maybe I'll spend a little more time bowling."

Burkett has put bowling on the back burner more than once. A sixth-round draft choice of the San Francisco Giants in 1983, he made a pair of All-Star appearances (1993 and 2001) and won 166 games (4.31 lifetime ERA) in 15 seasons. Money served as the impetus to his choosing professional baseball.

"The Giants paid me \$13,000 [to sign]," Burkett said. "I was making \$3 an hour at the bowling alley. I decided to accept the contract. I always felt I was a better bowler than I was a pitcher, but I decided to go with baseball because you only get one chance with that. You can bowl forever."

Debuting in 1987, Burkett enjoyed his best seasons with San Francisco, including the memorable 1993 campaign in which the Giants and Braves went toe-to-toe in one of the game's great pennant races. He won a career-best and league-high 22 games (tied with Tom Glavine) for San Francisco, which yielded to Atlanta on the season's final weekend. Winners of 103 games – the Braves won 104 – the Giants watched the post-season from home.

"That was tough," Burkett said. "That was the best team, by far, I ever played on. The Braves got so hot. It was very disappointing, but that's how it goes. You may never see another pennant race like that again."

Following stops in Florida and Texas, Burkett agreed to a free agent deal with the Braves in December 2000 and spent two seasons in an Atlanta uniform.

"It was a little awkward, but it was a lot different than I thought it'd be," Burkett said. "I met some of the classiest guys while I was with the Braves."

He was chosen as an NL All-Star in 2001, when he made 34 starts, won 12 games, and finished third in the league in earned run average (career-best 3.04). Only Curt Schilling and Randy Johnson were tougher to score against.

Burkett left Atlanta in wake of the 2001 season and finished his career in Boston. He retired in 2003, leaving a contract offer from the Yankees on the table in order to spend more time with his wife and children.

"I was fortunate to be healthy and dependable," Burkett said. "I'd like to think that coaches and managers knew, no matter what, that I took the ball every fifth day. I was average, and I'll take that."

HOW I MADE IT TO THE MAJORS

JANET MARIE SMITH
BALLPARK PLANNER

BY STEVE FALL

BEFORE IT BECAME Turner Field, the Braves current home held 85,000 fans during the 1996 Summer Olympic Games. Transforming that huge venue into a baseball park was no easy feat.

Janet Marie Smith, now the senior vice president of planning and development for the Boston Red Sox, summarized the project she worked on for the Braves.

"How do you take a venue as large as that was for the Olympics, and design it so that it has the sort of cozy intimacy that makes baseball parks so special? It was a very interesting design challenge," said Smith, who was the Braves' vice-president of planning and development from 1994 through 1999. "I tried to build consensus among all the different entities involved in planning the park: From Aramark on the concession side, to people representing fan relations, ticket sales, marketing, and all the things that go into a ballpark."

Smith grew up a Braves fan in Jackson, Mississippi, which made the Turner Field project even more special to her. While Olympic officials focused on getting the stadium ready for the Summer Games, Smith and her team looked beyond that.

"For us, we were looking at it as much more than just this great celebration in time. We were looking at it as a long-term home for the Braves," she said.

Smith now focuses her efforts on Fenway Park, planning improvements with a team of architects, contractors, and Red Sox colleagues. Several popular modifications – such as adding seating atop the "Green Monster" wall in left field – have expanded the stadium's capacity without sacrificing its character.

If not for some good timing, Smith may never have had a career in baseball. She earned a bachelor's degree in architecture at Mississippi State University, and then worked for several years in New York City. By attending school at night, she got her master's degree in urban planning at City College of New York.

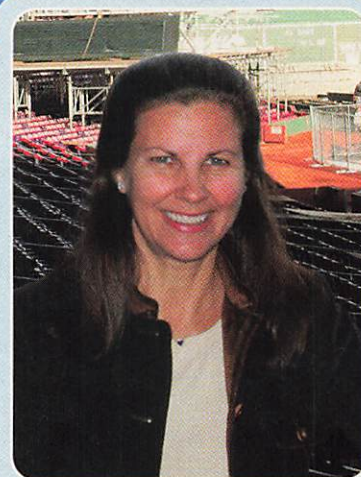
"I'd always loved baseball as a fun passion, but I was interested in city building more than anything else," said Smith.

Larry Lucchino, then the Orioles' president and CEO, hired Smith in 1989 to help design Camden Yards. They wanted a park with urban character and the traditional feel of old ballparks. Architecture was changing, and Smith had worked on a similar style at New York's Battery Park City that had never been applied to stadiums. So even though she lacked a sports background, Smith landed this unique opportunity.

"What's wonderful about my career is it doesn't fit any mold," said Smith. "It's not exactly architecture, because I don't design myself. I oversee teams that do. It's not exactly sports, because my focus is on the planning and the physical facility."

Smith couldn't think of anyone with a similar job in baseball, which prompted a suggestion for young people.

"While you want to go to college and pick something to study, you don't have to fit into a narrowly defined description of that profession. And I think that's true with almost anything."



BOSTON RED SOX

ALUMNI NOTES



The late **Lou Burdette** (RHP, 1951-63; Coach, 1972-73) was to be inducted into the University of Richmond's Athletic Hall of Fame Jan. 26. Burdette, the MVP of the 1957 World Series, pitched for Richmond in 1946. That year, Burdette was named All-Virginia Big Six, however, the Yankees, who later traded him to the Braves, signed him in 1947.

The Milwaukee Braves Historical Association will honor **Bobby Thomson** (OF, 1954-57) on May 15 at a banquet at Potawatomi Bingo Casino. Thomson is famous for his "Shot Heard Round the World" on Oct. 3, 1951, a home run against Brooklyn to give the New York Giants the NL pennant. Traded to Milwaukee in 1954 for **Johnny Antonelli** (LHP, 1948-50, '53, '61), the 84-year-old Thomson lives in Savannah, Ga. Also on the program will be **Andy Pafko** (OF, 1953-59), who was playing left field for the Dodgers when Thomson hit his pennant-winning homer. Ticket details are pending.

Lee Thomas (1B, 1966) will be inducted into the Missouri Sports Hall of Fame Feb. 10 at the University Plaza Hotel in Springfield.

Mark Lemke (2B, 1988-97) is honorary chairman of the annual Walton Area Chamber Celebrity Golf Classic to be held on April 29 at the Tom Fazio-designed Camp Creek Golf Club in Panama City, Fla. Former Braves scheduled to participate include **Rick Cerone** (C, 1985), **Tom Martin** (LHP, 2004-05), **Greg McMichael** (RHP, 1993-96, 2000), **Phil Niekro** (RHP, 1964-83, '87), and **Pete Smith** (RHP, 1987-93). For more information, contact Michelle Tommey at (850) 267-0683 or michelle@walton-countychamber.com.

Seattle signed **Chris Reitsma** (RHP, 2004-06) to a minor league contract with an invitation to spring training.

Colorado signed **Marcus Giles** (2B,

2001-06) to a minor league contract with a spring training invitation.

The Houston Astros signed **Chad Paronto** (RHP, 2006-07).

Ray King (LHP, 2003) signed with the Washington Nationals.

Willie Harris (OF, 2007) signed with Washington.

Johnny Estrada (C, 2003-05) was non-tendered by the Mets.

Jim Brower (RHP, 2005) signed a minor league contract with Cincinnati.

Joe Nelson (RHP, 2001) signed a minor league contract with Florida.

Kansas City signed **Ron Mahay** (LHP, 2007) to a two-year contract.

San Diego signed **Robert Fick** (1B, 2003) to a minor league contract with an invitation to spring training.

Pete Orr (INF, 2005-07) signed with Washington.

Mark Redman (LHP, 2007) signed a one-year contact with the Rockies.

Colorado named **Dave Schuler** (LHP, 1985) pitching coach of the Tri-City Dust Devils in the Northwest League (Class A short season).

Baltimore named **Larry Jaster** (LHP, 1970, '72) pitching coordinator for Florida minor league facilities.

Brad Komminsk (OF, 1983-86) was named bench coach of the Bowie Baysox, Double-A affiliate of the Baltimore Orioles.

Mike Bell (1B, 1990-91) will manage the Visalia Oaks, the Arizona Diamondbacks' affiliate in the Class A California League.

Adam Bernero (RHP, 2005) signed a minor league contract with Pittsburgh.

* BIRTHDAYS *

FEBRUARY

1 ST	HAL KING (64) KENT MERCKER (40)
2 ND	RED SCHOENDIENST (85) LEO FOSTER (57)
4 TH	MAX LEON (58)
5 TH	HANK AARON (74) LEE THOMAS (72) VIC CORRELL (62) NORM MILLER (62) MIKE HEATH (53) CHRIS BROCK (38)
6 TH	CHARLIE GORIN (80) BOB WICKMAN (39)
7 TH	JUAN PIZARRO (71) DAMASO GARCIA (53) CHARLIE PULEO (53)
8 TH	OSCAR BROWN (62)
9 TH	JIM NASH (63) ED WHITED (44) TODD PRATT (41)
10 TH	RALPH HODGIN (92) BILLY O'DELL (76) LARRY MCWILLIAMS (54)
12 TH	KEN SMITH (50)
13 TH	NORM WALLEN (91)
14 TH	LEN G. GABRIELSON (68)
15 TH	DUCKY DETWEILER (89) JOE HESKETH (49)
16 TH	TERRY CROWLEY (61) BOB DIDIER (59) BILL PECOTA (48) DWAYNE HENRY (46) RICO ROSS (44) MIKE HUBBARD (37)
17 TH	JAMIE EASTERLY (55) MIKE MACHA (54)
18 TH	DAL MAXVILL (69) RAFAEL RAMIREZ (50)
19 TH	RUSS NIXON (73) BOB SADOWSKI (70) DAVE CHEADLE (56)
20 TH	DEREK LILLIGUIST (42) RYAN LANGERHANS (28) BRIAN MCCANN (24)
22 ND	STEVE COYLER (29) KELLY JOHNSON (26)
23 RD	BOBBY BONILLA (45)
24 TH	NICK ESASKY (48) STEVE TORREALBA (30) DEWAYNE WISE (30)
25 TH	ANDY PAFKO (87) DENNY LEMASTER (69) KEN DAYLEY (49)
26 TH	JOHNNY BLANCHARD (75) GEORGE KOPACZ (67) MARK DEROSA (33)
27 TH	PETE SMITH (42)
28 TH	MARTY PEREZ (62)
29 TH	AL AUTRY (56)

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THE REAL POINT

OKAY, SO MARK KOTSAY is not going to break Andruw Jones' franchise home run record of 51 set in 2005. And he probably won't win a Gold Glove either. But it's a good bet that he'll hit higher than .222.

In no way, shape or form is Kotsay a similar player to the long-time fixture he'll be replacing in the wide expanse of center field grass at Turner Field. That isn't necessarily a bad thing. In fact, it could be a very good thing.

Before we get to that, let's address the real point of the coming season. Center field will not win or lose the division race. Starting pitching will do that. It primarily was starting pitching that kept the Braves out of the post-season last year, not Andruw's .222 average.

If Tom Glavine can give the Braves 200 innings and if Chuck James has a healthy shoulder that allows him to regain the capabilities he showed as a rookie in 2006, Atlanta will be sitting pretty come late September.

Gene Conley, a pitcher on the 1957 World Champion Milwaukee Braves and the only man to play on world championship teams in two sports (Boston Celtics of the NBA in 1958-61) recently was quoted in the Boston Globe on the subject of starting pitching.

"You get three or four good pitchers, you can win," Conley said. "You can put Joe Blow in the field and still win."

It was true when Conley pitched, it is true today, and it will be true as long as baseball is played.

Kotsay is not Joe Blow. He's talented enough that he was a No.-1 draft pick, and considering he's just 32 and was given a clean bill of health after a year recovering from back surgery, there's no reason to doubt that he can be a solid contributor to a division-winning team.

Though he hasn't won a Gold Glove, he is widely regarded as an excellent center-fielder who will benefit from having a Gold Glover - Jeff Francoeur - playing next to him every night.

In spite of his back problems, Kotsay remains a .282 lifetime hitter who's never struck out 90 times in a season. Andruw, for all his positive contributions, hit

above .277 only once in his career and not above .263 for the last four years. Sometimes, it seemed like he struck out 90 times in a week. Well, didn't it?

The point is that Kotsay brings a lot to the ballpark, much of which cannot be measured with stats and awards. He's what's known as a "gamer." He will bring a spark of competitive spirit and fight that Andruw undoubtedly possesses but didn't show.

Though Kotsay won't hit 51 home runs, he will show that there's more than one way to skin a cat... more than one way to win.

There's plenty of home run power and run production on this team, no matter who plays center field. With the quality assets that Kotsay brings, the firepower that surrounds him, and a deep bullpen, the Braves have enough to win the division... if the starting pitchers deliver.

AT PRESS TIME, the Braves announced a decision to move their Triple-A affiliate from Richmond to suburban Atlanta in Gwinnett County for the 2009 season. A new stadium will be built by the county at 2500 Buford Dr. in Lawrenceville, on the west side of Buford Dr., just north of the intersection of Buford Dr. and Old Peachtree Rd.

Fans can place a \$100 deposit on season tickets at gwinnettbraves.com or by calling (404) 614-1300. Additional information about the franchise will be posted on the web site.

The Braves have had a team in Richmond since 1966 and will continue to play there this year. Bringing a top farm club so close to the parent team is unusual but not without precedent. The best example exists in Seattle, where the Mariners' Triple-A team is located in Tacoma, about 30 miles away.

THANKS TO ALL OUR READERS who submitted entries in the ChopTalk Holiday Photo Contest. Watch next month for some great examples of Braves holiday spirit and a list of prize winners.

THIS ISSUE OF CHOPTALK was mailed Jan. 22. The March issue will be mailed Feb. 21.

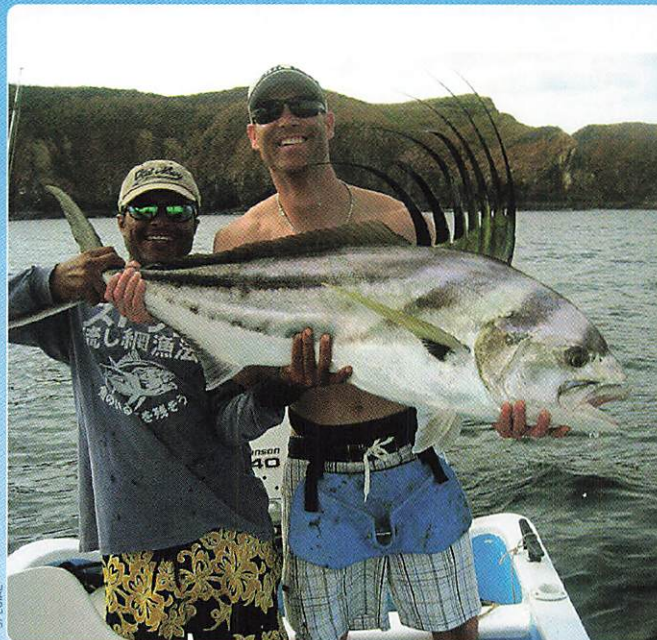
Tim Hudson's trip to Costa Rica included a close encounter with a rare, 70-pound rooster fish, as well as a tree-top tour and mud bathing!

BY PATTY RASMUSSEN



BIRD'S EYE VIEW

TIM AND KIM HUDSON made a "grownups only" week-long trip to Costa Rica in early January. The group included both Tim's and Kim's brothers and their wives and their long-time baseball friend, Cincinnati Reds first baseman **Scott Hatteberg** and his wife **Bitsy**. "Tim started planning this trip last July," said Kim. "We stayed in a couple of privately-owned villas, each with five bedrooms and five bathrooms. It was amazing. There are monkeys in the trees and gorgeous birds. We even saw humpback whales." The group went on zip line tree-top tours to get a bird's eye view of Costa Rica. Tim described it as the biggest adrenaline rush he's felt since his major league debut, nine years ago. "It was awesome," said Tim. "You're 300 feet off the ground, and when you reach a platform, you have to unlatch your harness from the wire, then make sure it's reattached before you take off again. That leap of faith when you leave the platform is a little stressful!" The group also surfed in the Pacific Ocean and took advantage of some local mud baths. "I was so relaxed I wasn't sure I wanted to come home," said Tim.



SPECIAL



CONGRATULATIONS to **Kelly Johnson** and his bride, the former **Lauren Thacker**, who were wed Jan. 26 in an evening ceremony at Peachtree Christian Church in Atlanta. The couple kept the wedding fairly small, approximately 100 guests. The rehearsal dinner was held at Turner Field's 755 Club, which gave Johnson's friends and family from his home state of Texas an opportunity to see where he works. The presence of baseball was kept to a minimum, though the groom's chocolate cake was decorated with chocolate icing and a chocolate Atlanta Braves "A" in the center. A number of Johnson's closest baseball friends attended the wedding, including fellow Texan and former Brave **Ryan Langerhans** and his wife **Shari** (Nationals), **Adam LaRoche** and wife, **Jenn** (Pirates), and **Adam Wainwright** (Cardinals). The couple honeymooned in Hawaii for a little over a week...

Also married on Jan. 26 were former Braves pitcher **Horacio Ramirez** (Seattle Mariners) and his long-time girl-



Former Braves lefthander Horacio Ramirez wed his long-time girlfriend, Veronica Palacios, in Atlanta Jan. 26.

friend **Veronica Palacios**, daughter of Spanish-language broadcaster **Fernando Palacios**. After dating several years, Ramirez proposed on Dec. 18, and the couple opted to marry before the start of the season. Veronica managed to snag a beautiful church for the event, Morningside Baptist Church in Atlanta. The reception was held at the Twelve Hotel in Atlantic Station, Midtown Atlanta...

Good help isn't so hard to find if you're **John Smoltz**. The pitcher invited his old friend and former catcher, **Greg Olson**, to accompany him to the **Michael Jordan Celebrity Invitational**, held Jan. 16-18, on the Oceans Club Golf Course, at Atlantis Resort in the Bahamas. "I've caddied for John for the last three years," said Olson.

"The main reason I go is because he's in the middle of his (baseball) workouts, and it's hard to find another caddy that can catch a 92-mph fastball!" Olson said he packed his glove in order to catch Smoltz on those days he needs to throw...



Tyler Yates and his wife, **Liesel**, kept busy at home in Hawaii this off-season with family visits and hosting barbecues. In December, Yates lent his expertise to the First Annual Kauai Baseball Clinic at the Lihue County Park. Approximately 150 young players took part in the clinic, which also featured Maui native **Shane Victorino**, current outfielder with the Phillies. The camp is a fundraiser for the west Oahu (Hawaii) baseball teams...

Bobby Cox has been on the go since the New Year began. He and his buddy, Phillies GM **Pat Gillick**, served as guest speakers at the Triple-A Syracuse Chiefs' 47th Annual Hot Stove Dinner, held Jan. 11, in Syracuse, N.Y. Cox managed the Chiefs (1973-76), and Gillick was involved with the Chiefs during his years in player development in the Yankees. Gillick was also the GM in Toronto in 1985 when Cox managed the team and led the Blue Jays to a division title. Cox and his wife, **Pam**, took a trip with friends to Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, Jan. 14-18. Upon their return from Mexico, Cox flew to Los Angeles on Jan. 19 to pick up the **Tommy Lasorda** Managers Award at the 5th Annual Spirit of the Game Dinner sponsored by the Professional Baseball Scouts Foundation held at the Hyatt Regency Century Plaza Hotel. Cox was in good company. Braves chairman emeritus, **Bill Bartholomay**, picked up the **Allan H. "Bud" Selig** Executive Leadership Award...

Aussie-native **Peter Moylan** returned to the U.S. rested and ready. The reliever followed an exercise routine that involved swimming, biking and running, and he sports a much leaner physique than in '07. He said the rumors of a movie of his life story are "just talk," though he did confirm that his Los Angeles based agent, **Steve Goldstein**, has talked to several people about it. "Maybe someday," said Moylan...

Former Brave **Brian Jordan** attended the **Frank Ski** Kids Foundation's 4th Annual Wine Tasting and Live Auction at Ski's Atlanta home on Dec. 16. Ski is a disk jockey on V-103 in Atlanta. In addition to Jordan, celebrity guests included **Luke** of 2 Live Crew and hip hop mogul **Sean "Diddy" Combs**.

Jordan's 15-year-old daughter, **Briana**, was the star of the family. She was honored as a member of the Gwinnett County Tipoff Club's Team of the Month at a morning banquet held Jan. 12. Briana, a high

school sophomore, is a standout basketball player at Greater Atlanta Christian School. She comes by her athletic prowess honestly. In addition to a famous athlete father, her mom, **Pam**, was an All-American basketball player at the University of Richmond...

Trying to learn more about living options around Atlanta, new reliever **Will Ohman**, his wife, **Allyson**, and their two-year-old twins, **Jack** and **Annabel**, met with **Kim Hudson** at the Hudsons' home in Peachtree City following Ohman's Saturday afternoon stint at FanFest Jan. 12. Kim gave the Ohmans the "Chamber of Commerce" tour, and the two families went out for dinner...

Congratulations to Braves video coordinator, **Rob Smith**, and his wife, **Carmen**,

who welcomed their first child, a boy, **Tyler**, on Dec. 8...

Frank Wren took his family, wife **Terri**, and sons **Kyle**, **Colby**, and **Jordan**, for a pre-Christmas ski trip to Park City, Utah. The Wrens returned to Atlanta on Dec. 24, in time to celebrate the holiday at home...

Gene Conley, a pitcher on the World Champion 1957 Milwaukee Braves team, had a pacemaker implanted at the start of 2008. The 77-year-old Conley, and his wife, **Katie**, were featured in the April 2007 issue of *ChopTalk*. Conley is the only man to win World Championships in two sports - with the 1957 Braves, and in 1961 with the NBA's Boston Celtics. The Conleys live in Clermont, Fla., not far from the Braves spring training complex at Disney World.



Brian McCann interacts with some of the 45 players, ages 7-17, who attended his first Christmas Camp on Dec. 26-27 in suburban Atlanta.

HOLIDAY HITTING

BRIAN McCANN fulfilled a dream when he held his first **Brian McCann** Christmas Camp, Dec. 26 and 27, at Buntun Road Park in the Atlanta suburb of Duluth. "Seven years ago, I was where some of those kids are, at the same high school," said McCann. "I would love to have gone to a camp and gotten help from a major league player." The 45 players who participated ranged in age from 7 to 17. McCann said the timing of the event, immediately after Christmas, worked especially well for high school players getting ready for their season, and he said he would like to grow the event to accommodate 100 players. Instructors for the clinic included

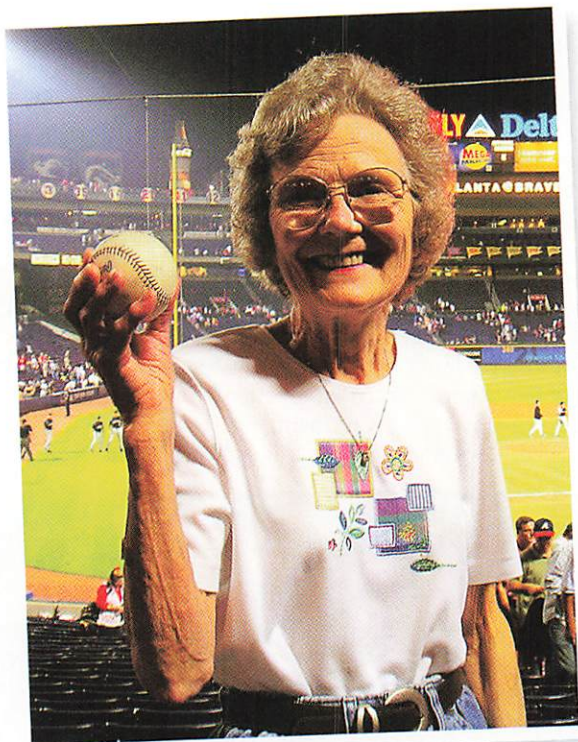
McCann, his father, **Howie**, owner of Windward Baseball Academy, brother, **Brad**, a Kansas City Royals prospect, **Al Goetz**, owner of the **Chipper Jones** Baseball Academy in Suwanee, and other Winward instructors. The McCanns also held an impromptu baseball clinic called "Winward Baseball Day" on Dec. 15 for many of Howie's long-time clients.

McCann said he's ready for spring training. "I'd go today if I could," he said in early January. McCann will report to Disney on Feb. 14. His new wife, **Ashley**, will arrive two weeks later. "I can use the two weeks before she gets there to get in plenty of afternoon golf," said McCann.

TALKIN' CHOP

LETTERS & PHOTOS FROM OUR READERS

WHETHER YOU'RE HAVING FUN AT TURNER FIELD, EXPERIENCING A CLOSE ENCOUNTER WITH YOUR FAVORITE BRAVES PLAYER, OR JUST SHOWING OFF YOUR COLLECTION OF BRAVES STUFF OR TRYING ON YOUR NEW BRAVES SHIRT, WE WANT TO HEAR ABOUT IT AND SEE A PICTURE.



GRANNY'S GOT GAME ✉

Our grandmother, Catherine Croley, has lived in the Atlanta area for over 50 years. One evening we took her to Turner Field to see the Braves play the Rockies. Granny had never been to Turner Field, and she was in amazement of all the things that went on during the game. Granny had a blast and was so excited. In the last inning, a foul ball came into the stands, and our usher caught it. Everyone was screaming for it. The usher came over and tossed the ball to my granny. She has it in her room today and was very excited to be a part of this special night.

MICHELLE CROLEY GILLEY
Monroe, Ga.

DRUMMER BOY ✉

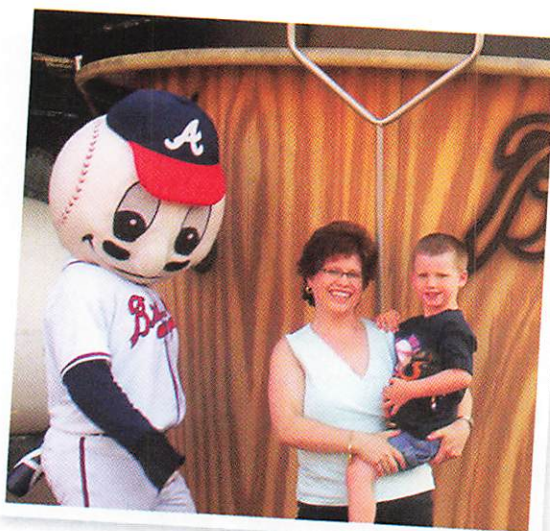
This past summer, I had a fabulous vacation in Atlanta with my parents, who are major Braves fans. They've been traveling from Erie, Pa., for the past nine years to attend six to seven games in a row each time. I tagged along with my 4-year-old son, Sean, this time, and we went to three games. I was lucky to get some great pictures! My mom subscribes and says how excited she would be to see a picture of her grandson in ChopTalk. We had the best time at Turner Field - my son loved the heavy hitters!

LORI MATSON
Pittsburgh, Pa.

JILL'S ADVENTURES ✉

My wife, Jill, and I have both been avid Braves fans since the early 1980s. However, I think my wife has me beat. She celebrated her 16th birthday at a Durham Bulls game (a Braves affiliate in 1981) where she got autographs from several future Braves, including Jeff Dedmon, Brad Komminsk and Rick Behenna. And 25 years later, while visiting friends in Atlanta in 2006, she attended one Braves game with them. When her friends had an unavoidable conflict the next day, Jill "snuck out" to Turner Field for the matinee. She arrived early to get great seats behind the dugout and was fortunate to get several players' autographs, as well. When she asked Tyler Yates to sign a ball that had already been signed by Phil Niekro, he politely declined in deference to Niekro's Hall of Fame status. But then Tyler grabbed another ball and signed it for Jill. Later during the game, a Francoeur foul ball was coming right to her, but another fan knocked her out of the way to catch it. After witnessing what happened, an usher, as well as several Braves players and coaches, gave Jill another ball. We look forward to returning to Turner Field very soon.

BEN LUCAS
Charlotte, N.C.



CHOPTALK AND THE ATLANTA BRAVES SUPPORT OUR TROOPS

IMPRESSIVE PERFORMANCE

My son, JoJo, recently went to a baseball clinic at Windward Academy in Atlanta that featured Brian McCann. He was ecstatic to get to meet Brian and talk to him. Brian was very gracious and even signed JoJo's baseball glove. Brian took time with each child at the clinic, and I was very impressed. I have included a picture that now hangs on my son's wall. Thanks Brian!

JOANNA HIGGENBOTTOM
N. Augusta, S.C.

LONG-TERM LOVE

No more Braves games on TBS... I knew it was coming and thought I could handle it, but I am devastated. When Chip and Joe talked about it Sept. 16, the reality began to sink in. I cried every time they brought it up for the rest of the game. I became a Braves fan because of TBS and will remain a Braves fan, but it will be harder to follow the team. Thank you for ChopTalk and your hard work in making it such an informative magazine, because you will be my only real contact to the team I love. I will be a subscriber for the duration.

STEPHANIE ALEGRIA
Reno, Nev.



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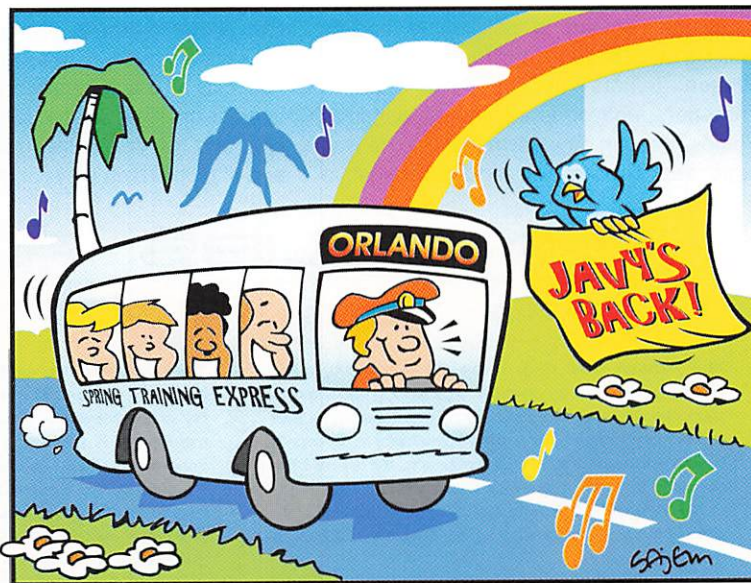
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A FAN FAVORITE RETURNS!



XTRA INNINGS

AS A PARENT, GLAVINE'S PASSION IS ON ICE

BY PATTY RASMUSSEN

WHEN TOM GLAVINE elected to sign with the Braves out of high school rather than with the Los Angeles Kings of the NHL, he didn't lose his interest in hockey. That's never been more obvious than this off-season when the 303-game winner spent a good deal of his time coaching youth hockey in a big way.

Glavine didn't just coach a team, or even two... He helped coach four teams!

"I love watching these guys play," said a smiling Glavine after a December game. "They enjoy playing so much, and they have the same passion I had when I was kid."

As for the amount of time he puts in, between weekly practices and games for four different teams at rinks throughout the Atlanta area, Glavine simply said, "A big part of my enjoyment of sports when I was a kid was having my parents there all the time. Now that I'm a parent, I have a greater appreciation for what they did. I just want to watch them have their fun."

While a senior in high school in Billerica, Massachusetts, Glavine led his team to the 1984 Division I North Title and the Eastern Massachusetts Championships. His talent and reputation was such that the Kings made him their fourth-round draft pick (69th player overall). The Braves drafted him in the second round. Fortunately for Braves fans, he chose baseball over hockey, and the result is history.

Glavine remains a passionate hockey fan. He was one of the first to purchase season tickets to the NHL Atlanta Thrashers, and he is a frequent visitor at Philips Arena in downtown Atlanta. He was supposed to suit up and skate at a



Glavine's a two-sport star, winning 303 games - and counting - in the National League and coaching four youth hockey teams.

Thrashers practice in mid-January, only to cancel due to illness.

Glavine's wife, Chris, a Rhode Island native, is also an ardent hockey fan. Thus, it is no surprise at all that her son, Jonathan (13), and the couple's two sons, Peyton (8) and Mason (7), all play ice hockey.

Glavine is a coach on all of his sons' teams, and another team to boot!

"I'd been helping with Jonathan's team a little bit last year," said Glavine. "These guys (Peyton and Mason) asked if I would coach their team. I wanted them to play a bit before I started coaching them. The guy who coaches them this season is a neighbor and friend, so I started helping out."

Glavine helps coach the modified traveling team, called the Irish Jr., which Jonathan plays on, as well as Peyton's traveling team, and a "mites" team, the Scorpions. Mason plays alongside Peyton on the Scorpions. Glavine also assists with a team of very skilled older teenagers.

On the Scorpions, Peyton wears #10 on his jersey, and Mason wears #5. The two boys are fiercely competitive and very competent skaters. And they speak proudly of Jonathan's hockey prowess.

"I want to play for the Irish Jr. when I get older," said Mason.

For now, Peyton and Mason work out on the ice several days each week, sometimes twice a day if the team can get ice time, under the watchful eye of their dad. Glavine was his usual stoic self while watching them play, hands in pockets or arms crossed over his chest. But he has his moments of typical parental emotion.

His eyes darted around the rink, watching the puck, watching the players. He occasionally shouted reminders, "Two hands on the stick, Mason!"

When Peyton nearly scored a goal, deflected by the goalie, Glavine's hands flew up in jubilation, but then landed on his head as he cried, "You didn't!"

Ah, the frustrations of coaching.

FAN CLUBS

BRAVES 400 CLUB

The **Braves 400 Club** is the official fan club of the Atlanta Braves. It is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting baseball at all levels. Annual membership is \$25 and includes a newsletter and the opportunity to participate in activities such as road trips, luncheons, the annual banquet, and charitable events. Send payment to: Braves 400 Club, P.O. Box 7689, Atlanta, Ga. 30309. For more information, call the organization's hotline at (770) 416-4539 or visit braves400.org.

MILWAUKEE BRAVES HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

The **Milwaukee Braves Historical Association** is a non-profit organization that promotes the memory of the Milwaukee Braves (1953-65). Annual membership is \$25 and includes a newsletter. Send payment to: Milwaukee Braves Historical Association, c/o Express News, WB30 N10437 Washington Dr., Germantown, Wisc. 53022. For information, call (414) 347-1212 or visit milwaukee-braveshistoricalassociation.com.

BOSTON BRAVES HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

The **Boston Braves Historical Association** is a non-profit organization dedicated to keeping alive the memory of the Braves in the city where the franchise began in 1871 and that it represented through 1952. Annual membership is \$15 and includes a newsletter. Send payment to: Boston Braves Historical Association, P.O. Box 5668, Marlboro, Mass. 01752. For more information, call (508) 485-1423 or visit Boston-braves.com.



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6	July 31	Cardinals	Wild West Night
7	Aug. 16	Giants	Gate Giveaway Day
8	Sept. 7	Nationals	Bark in the Park II
9	Sept. 21	Mets	Final Regular Season Home Game

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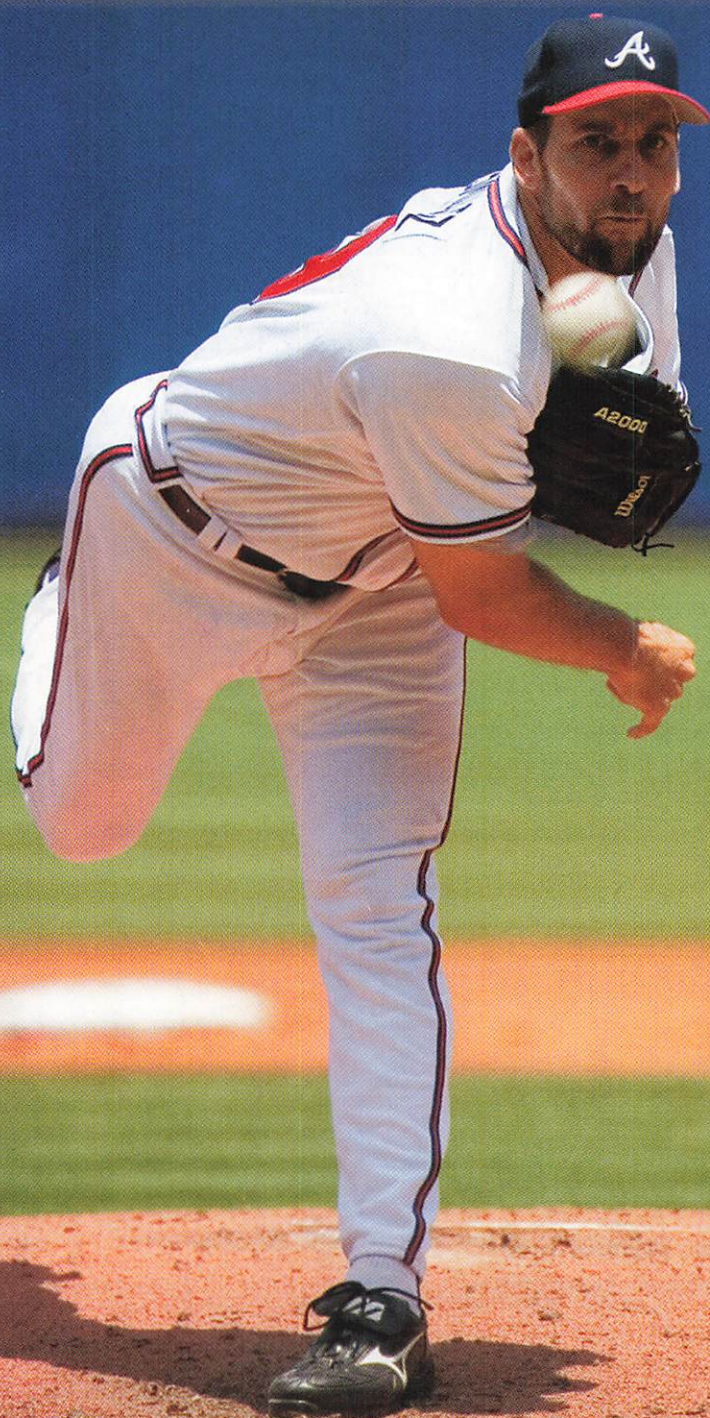
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